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HIDDEN POWER



JOHN G. WILLACY

Seem - American



May I be permitted to
extend the hand of fellowship
across the intervening hills and
valleys to a woman; - one who
is courageous through and
through; - womanly through and
through; who is so bravely
fighting for the right.

The Author.

San Antonio Texas

May 25- 1917.

To Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt.

NE







HIDDEN POWER

BY

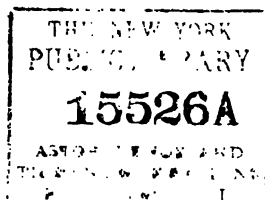
JOHN G. WILLACY



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“If we work marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal minds and instil into them just principals, we are then engraving that upon tablets which no time can efface, but will brighten and brighten to all eternity.”

—Webster.

To the Reader :—

Since the following chapters were written, our Country, in defense of National existence, the glory of our flag and the Golden Rule of The Man of Galilee, has been drawn into the vortex of war. Prompted by patriotic duty, Americans, everywhere,—men and women,—should and doubtless will, subrogate considerations of personal preference or gain, to the Nation's need. Government, such as ours, is grounded in the hearts of the people ; its potential force springs from the rich red blood and clear brains of sons and daughters of Gloryland. These constitute the soul which is our State. The richer the blood, the clearer the brain, the more invincible our arms.

With these thoughts uppermost in our mind, the attention of the reader of this Volume is earnestly and especially invited to that which is delineated upon the closing pages,—the Epilogue.

Yours for our Country's glory surpassing history,

THE AUTHOR.

PROLOGUE.

Incidents, recorded in these pages, though interwoven in fiction, are substantially, and essentially, based in fact,—They reflect tendencies in our social and political life which “he who runs may read,”—tendencies which, though deep-rooted and long developed, are happily now in the process of eradication. Throughout state and nation the axe of an awakened conscience, wielded by the strong arm of a kindled public intelligence, has at length been laid at the root of our tree of political corruption.

In symbolizing this long dormant and now sharply aroused civic spirit, the author has attempted to delineate the character of Robert Leigh. To represent an industry which, during long years has wrecked the hopes of men and women, he has designed the character of Beerman. Each symbolizes a principle; neither relates to men. There is scarcely an American commonwealth that is unacquainted with the redeeming qualities of the one, or the repelling features of the other.

If, as we contemplate the ignoble purposes and debasing methods of invisible government, there be reason to feel depressed, it is yet heartening to reflect that its degraded and degrading influence in

our political life is steadily and rapidly waning,—that the “invisible law”, so relentlessly enforced, is, if not yet broken, surely passing to, and destined to be lodged in, hearts and hands of men like Leigh, who, in the quiet of private life, perceive the trend of public wrong and who, become awakened to the growing menace, take a stand for high and noble purpose and in defense of civic right.

Like those who would oppress, such men are indigenous to America. East or West, North or South, they are native to all our soil. Character, whether good or bad,—whether virtuous or vicious,—is not a subject of geography, neither is it circumscribed or determined by longitude or latitude. The righteous man who lives in one section, or state, lifts the whole country up. The unrighteous man, it matters not where he may live, drags the whole country down. The former is a national asset; the latter a national liability.

If, perchance, this book may be read by young men and young women of America, it is the author's hope that these countrymen of his and these countrywomen of his, who are in truth the guardians of their country's future, may dedicate their willing hands and nimble brains, their high character and wholesome aspirations, to the unselfish service of preserving our institutions.

It is to young men and young women,—and the more especially to young women and young men who

have superior talents,—that the “hidden power” in our political life makes its insidious and corrupting appeal.

If, perchance, the hour of trial comes to these,—as, indeed it is not unlikely to come,—may they with resolute courage and fortitude enlist their body, mind and spirit in defense of those high purposes and clean methods which build up, conserve and protect our public and private life.

In Georgiana may be discerned a surely evolving type of womanhood not now uncommon to American life,—a type which represents “that good taste which is the conscience of the mind and that conscience which is the good taste of the soul,”—a spirit “mild as it is game, and game as it is mild.” Gentle through and through; courageous through and through; womanly through and through,—this type of woman is now interested, in no small measure, in our national destiny. Like Georgiana, her sister-women of the country hear, now, the call. They understand it is not intended for men only. Clear and high is their ethical conception of duty. Like Georgiana, they will answer, “here,”—like Georgiana, they will not fail.

THE AUTHOR.

San Antonio, Texas,

May, 1917.

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HIDDEN POWER

CHAPTER I.

Out where the West begins. The man of the Valley meets the man of the Plains.
"A country that is worth dying for is surely worth living for."

APRIL afternoon,—April in the Southwest! the Southern spring, redolent of the carnival spirit, full high advanced. Serious things of life forgotten for the moment, the hearts of the people, relaxed in gladness, were given up to gaiety. The old fort,—the Mecca of the Southwest's soul,—an American Thermopylae,—looked out from its now brightly decorated ruins upon the crowding, jostling, hilarious throng—and smiled, even as a mother, proud of her sons, grown men, smiles when, after many years and absence long, they gather in joy and reverence about her knees.

By day a monument of flowers, by night an artistic marvel of illuminated art, the historic pile, steeped in heroic associations, touched the hearts of every beholder with no mean sense of solemn pride. Throughout the town, buildings, public and private, lifted up their heads, saluting reverently with bunt-

ing, varied-colored and entwined with flags of state and nation. Young and old, daughters and sons, either by birth or adoption, gave themselves up to jollity.

In the urging, surging, singing throng, elbowing a way, gently yet confidently, toward the old fort, strode a young man,—evidently a new comer,—moved by a purpose at once definite and serious. About him there was little that was likely to awaken more than incidental interest, save only perhaps a certain unmistakable alertness, intentness and earnestness. Slight of frame and square shouldered, he strode, erect, with an air of self mastery. The dark brown hair near the temples was prematurely touched with gray. The face, highly colored, accentuated a slight scar high up on the brow. Deep blue eyes reflected the infectious enthusiasm of the throng.

Out upon the plaza and in the intervening thoroughfare, a grateful people, with recollected lore of freedom, and not unmindful of the sacrifice paid for their liberties, had, but a few moments before, fought once again, as is their annual wont, the battle memorialized by the historic fort;—yet not with bayonet or sword or musket ball, as had their forefathers three score years or more before, but with roses and lilacs whose fragrance now rose as incense before the altar,—the very tabernacle,—of their liberties.

With each passing year, within this beautiful old town, steeped to the lips in historic romance, reverent people thus paid their tribute of affection and admiration for the men who, in the one supremely heroic hour of the State's history, had "proved their faith by their endeavor" and gladly given their lives that liberty might live.

Come at length to the chapel's doorway, the young man paused. Looking out over the crowding people massed in front of the old ruins, his thoughts leaped the intervening years and fixed themselves upon what he fain would imagine were the scenes and actors of that earlier and more tragic hour of the town's,—and the State's,—and the Nation's,—history. Turning on his heel the newcomer faced the fort with its open door where stood the veteran guardian ready to welcome youth and age alike into what, to the old man, was a shrine little less than a "holy of holies",—

With uncovered head, as though in some sacred presence, the young man drew near the aged keeper. With a sense of privilege, he asked that he might cross the threshold of what was become to him already a temple of the spirit.

"With pleasure", said the old man, with a bow and gesture of generous greeting, "You're welcome. Everyone is welcome here."

Once inside the building, the young stranger gazed upon the rugged walls of crudely chiseled rock, spanned by deep arches; not irreverently touched the gray surfaces with their curiously carved inscriptions; read these with a sense of their impressive significance, and listened the while to the oft-repeated story as told with repressed enthusiasm by the aged keeper.

"I'm told", at length interrupted the young man, "that though Thermopylae had its messenger of defeat, the struggle that these ruins memorialize had none."

"True, sir," said the old man with a tone of solemn reassurance. "Of those who fought here no man was left to tell the story. Only one woman and one child survived."

At the words many another young man might have exclaimed his admiration. The listening stranger made answer only with an expression of transfixed awe.

"One got out before the final attack," the keeper went on, as though to be exact, "but that man," he added "was seen of men—no more."

Slowly and gravely,—and in a tone that faintly suggested it had been memorized and oft repeated to others, with a pride pardonable in the veteran

guardian of the old ruins,—the concluding phrase was spoken.

“The others,—those who died here,—why was it they did not escape?” inquired the young man.

“Let me tell you,” began the old custodian, with the manner of a master initiating some novice into mysteries unknown. “We were fighting a good fight and a great fight,—an old, old fight, sir,—as old as the centuries,—old as the race itself. It was the fight for liberty,—for the freedom of our people. We believed we had the right to govern ourselves,—believed it in every beat of our blood, in every fibre of our frame. Our rulers denied us this right,—oppressed us in our weakness, mocked us in the assertion of our rights and scorned and taunted us in our resolve to maintain them. The thing came to an issue on the spot where we now stand. When the supreme test came,—it was a test, sir, and the test **was** supreme,—the men who died here,—here determined to take down their rifles rather than give up their rights. If we hadn’t had the courage to make our deeds square with our words we would never have been citizens; we would have been only and always subjects.”

For a moment the old man paused as though to permit the younger man beside him to weigh the significance of the words—

"No American can be a subject," the veteran went on, "The very word, 'subject,'—carries with it the implication of slavery." The aged keeper had lifted high his head, and, with shoulders squared, stood looking challengingly into the eyes of the youthful stranger.

"You say 'we'," interrupted the younger man. "Am I to infer that you were at, or near, the battle?"

"In a way, yes," said the old man, promptly. "Everyone who has lived long in, or near, this State was there. At a time like that people may, in a certain sense and through the mediation of a Power higher than themselves, be present,—in spirit if not in flesh. In this sense, all who now live, though then unborn, were present at that battle, just as those who perished there in the flesh, are now here with us, this day, in spirit and will be with us, here, always."

The subduing yet impressive tone of the old man was not lost upon the younger's spirit.

"Do you know," said the visitor, modestly, "that is a rarely beautiful sentiment—if I may say so? What a splendid heritage is yours,—and mine. Surely we can never fail to defend and preserve the liberty that was so precious bought for us here by those men who here died. With their own blood they dedicated to us and to ours forever, the liberty which they here gave up their lives to win."

At these words of the younger, the older man bowed his head, even as some master magician is in the habit of doing as he perceives his pupil accepting some subtly given occult suggestion. Whereupon the visitor stepped towards a desk in the fort upon which, open wide, lay the "register," in which all visitors were permitted, and expected, to inscribe their names. An interesting record it was, containing as it did names from many points of the compass, each followed by some 'sentiment' inscribed either carelessly, or painstakingly, and varying with the temper, attitude, character or attainments, of the writer thereof.

With the old custodian standing hard by and observing intently, the interested stranger, with a feeling more impressive than that of merely complying with a custom, took his place before the desk and wrote on the register. In doing so he was engaged somewhat longer, the custodian remarked, than is the usual visitor to the 'shrine'. This done, the young man thanked the older one for the courtesies shown, grasped the custodian's hand in parting and made his way out of the fort. In a few moments he was once more in the noisy, pushing crowd and threading his way toward the quaint, picturesque hotel fronting on the plaza.

When the young visitor, more impressive than

many another one of his years, was gone, the keeper adjusted his glasses and scrutinized what the young man had written upon the register. Again and yet again the old man read the inscription, evidently touched not a little by what was revealed to his dimmed eyes.

In a hand-writing, firm and decisive, rather than bold, the words were these :

John Gordon. From the Valley of the Ohio. These men who here died, came hither never to return,—that liberty might live, they gave up life. Surely posterity should ever defend with the ballot, a precious heritage bought with the bullet.

“Go stranger, and to Sparta tell
Obedient to her law we fell.”

“Two lines! For six centuries all Greece knew them by heart. She forgot them—and living Greece was living Greece no more.”

A spirited people honors its heroes, not with lip service merely but with reverence and, so far as in them lies, with emulation. “To be as good as our fathers we must be better.” A country that is worth dying for is surely worth living for.

Night was now come. From the balcony of the hotel could be seen the gay throngs shifting along

the brilliantly lighted thoroughfare. Here and there at points of vantage, brilliantly illuminated devices,—the last word in advertising art,—lifted their amazing fronts, picturesque or grotesque, against an after-twilight sky. To the left of the balcony where John Gordon was standing, shown forth one of these illuminated signs. Now ablaze and now extinguished, it arrested the attention of thousands of passers by. Symbolizing an earlier day it revived memories of a time when cattle-raising was the principal industry of the State and cattle-roping a prized accomplishment. To the less discerning observer, the dexterous throw of the lasso by the Mexican Vaquerro, as, from the back of his calico pony, running at full speed, he would deftly drop the noose over the horns, or around the left hind foot of his prey, awakened no thought other than one of wonder. To John Gordon, however, there was a meaning, other than merely an exhibition of skill,—a meaning separate and distinct. In this young man's imagination, the hunted steer, in its efforts for freedom, symbolized the State, while the relentless pursuer, clothed in the picturesque garb of the Montezumas, seemed to revitalize the State's ancient enemy and oppressor. At the moment he was in a frame of mind susceptible to impressions. The interesting story of the old ruin was still fresh in

his memory. The hard visage of the Vaquerro reminded him of the oppressors in the early struggle for liberty as pictured upon the walls of the old fort and so graphically told by the aged keeper. The thought troubled him. The design was indeed artistic,—the border a wonderful blending of beautiful, harmonizing colors, pleasing to the fancy, yet it suggested to Gordon's mind a dazzling scheme, wrought upon the surface, intended to disguise some cunning design beneath. When, after the steer had been successfully thrown to the ground, the automatically-controlled mechanism flashed in great, bright letters, the character of the business so brilliantly announced, the young man frowned.

"Characters and hidden purposes of men will in some outward act reveal themselves," he remarked audibly.

"Beg pardon, friend. Did you speak to me?"

A voice seemed to come from the depths of the night. Gordon had not observed that he was not alone. Near him, and within easy hearing, was a man, tall, well-knit, broad-shouldered and erect,—a true specimen of the Southwest; in high boots the trousers were loosely tucked, the clean soft shirt carelessly, irregularly, bestowed above. Upon his head the wide wool hat shaded eyes, black and piercing in the electric light, as, questioningly, he looked into

Gordon's. Clean-shaven, the features were strong and regular, yet kind. His complexion bronzed from exposure to sun and wind told a story of outdoor life. About him was an air of quiet self-confidence that bespoke the man of self-reliance, resource, and decision of character.

As a rule these traits are characteristic of true western civilization,—or at least were once so. In the rough walks of life, such as were trod by men of this man's class, many of them highly educated and accomplished, the door of opportunity was open and wide to men of courage only. Exceptions, of course, there were. In pioneer life there is a certain rebound, with its fresh opportunities. Miss this and our fellows pass us by and on to the front. Though all men may be born equal, success comes only by achievement. Timid hearts content themselves with that which has been overlooked or rejected by men of purpose, intention, and action.

In response to the question John Gordon turned. The contrast between the two men was so marked as to fix attention. In the flash of a moment each experienced that mental process, often unerring in analysis, that frequently determines future confidence and relationship. In addressing him as "friend," it seemed to the newcomer that the man of the West had stepped clear over all social bound-

aries, familiar to Gordon's Eastern traditions, and at one stroke established at least an acquaintance. Upon his part, his prompt acceptance of the friendly advance placed them both at ease.

"Well, to be frank with you,—no," said Gordon with an air of intimate confidence. "No, I was not speaking to you. But I'm glad you overheard my remark and spoke to me. Otherwise I should not have had this pleasure."

The two men clasped hands frankly, and, for a moment, stood looking into each other's eyes.

"That sounds good to me," said the stranger, simply, and with an utter absence of any thought of any unusual situation. "Stopping here?"

"Yes, for a while at least—until I get located definitely."

"Ever here before?"

"No, sir, this is my first visit to your wonderful State."

"How do you like it?"

"Very much indeed,—so far. I arrived only this morning. As yet I've seen very little of it."

"Where you from here?" interestedly.

"I was born and reared in the valley of the Ohio, on the border of Kentucky and Indiana." As Gordon spoke, the Westerner seemed to detect some slight suggestion of loneliness.

"A mighty fine country, that," he quickly replied, "but too small. Not enough elbow room."

Then, as if to emphasize the superior merits of the West,—

"Ever been on any of our ranches?"

"No. I haven't had the opportunity as yet. I hope to have it however."

"I've got a little pasture out from here a little ways," said the Westerner, modestly,— "What you going to do tomorrow?"

"Why, I thought I would look over the city and maybe some of the surrounding country."

"That's all right, if you want to stop over a day."

Then, as though the plan had been long agreed upon:

"I'll stay over with you and we'll see the town together. Then we can get an early start next morning, and be there by sundown."

At this, Gordon looked into the eyes of the Westerner inquiringly. The thought of visiting interesting points of the quaint old city in company with his new friend of but a few short minutes was pleasing, but he could not quite grasp the meaning of the reference to the day after. All doubt, however, was quickly dispelled.

"We could make the ranch by noon if the roads were good," said the Westerner, "but my car is too

heavy for speed on the kind we have," almost apologetically.

Gordon now began to understand. The man of the West was proposing to take him to his ranch. Somehow it all appealed to him as fine. Not only that, but altogether in harmony with his mental analysis of the extraordinary character before him. A close student of human nature, Gordon was already becoming interested in this man and his friendly advances were distinctly refreshing. Into his mind there had come not the slightest suspicion of distrust. It fitted well into his plans and there was not the least doubt of the Westerner's purpose. The only question was: What, upon Gordon's part, would be proper under the circumstances?

"How far is your ranch from here?" he ventured, at length.

"Hundred and fifty miles," carelessly. Yet he had, but a moment ago, remarked that his ranch was "out from here a little ways."

To the newcomer was being opened fresh understanding of the magnificent distances of the West. Up to this point neither knew the name of the other. Somehow they had forgotten the conventional introduction. Each had offered,—each had accepted,—friendly advances without question. However, to John Gordon this did not seem particularly strange.

He was no stickler for form, but this assumption on the part of this man of the West that, as a matter of course, Gordon was to accompany him to his ranch somewhat overwhelmed him. He was acquiescing, not in any spirit of adventure, but in a sense purely responsive. At one quick bound, from mere acquiescence, he became enthusiastic. It would be a new experience and help him understand the wonders of the State of his adoption.

"How long will we be away,—from here?" Gordon asked.

"Just as long as you care to stay," came the reply, and with an assurance that left nothing to be inferred.

Gordon could not, however, fail to note comparisons. All his life he had known of and enjoyed Kentucky hospitality, but, even to the Kentuckian, this experience was refreshing. Was this the spirit of the Western range? he asked himself.

"Don't you think it high time we were acquainted?" he finally suggested, once more extending his hand. "My name's John Gordon. I've come here to settle."

"Guess it would be better. Forgot all about our names," said the Westerner. "I knew you, though, before I spoke to you,—that is I knew who you were. My name is Robert Leigh."

"How did you know me? In what way? I don't quite understand."

"Why, I saw you this afternoon, as you inspected the ruins of the old fort. When you left there the keeper called me to read what you'd written in the register. That determined me to want to know you sure enough. Tonight, I saw you studying that electric sign. I could tell what you were thinking of. I was thinking the same thing."

Gordon could not fail to note that, with these last words, the Westerner's voice became strangely hard, while the smile, which from the first had never entirely left his countenance, had now given way to an expression of aversion not untouched with contempt.

Often it happens that the impulses of a moment may change, or determine, the whole course of a life. To Gordon, the character of the man before him was appealing. That he was native born he was sure. Beneath the plain, unpretentious exterior, he mentally concluded, was a man of fine discrimination,—one who knew himself,—one who, seeing the right, would be difficult to coerce. From that moment he determined to cultivate this friend of circumstances so unusual and cast his lot among those of this man's kind. A close student of political philosophy on his native heath, Gordon knew that, no matter what his

new field of activities, his early training would assert itself; that here, as in the valley, he would bear his part as one of the people in asserting the rights of the people, and that, were his quickly formed estimate of the man before him not at fault, here was one who, if once aroused to the larger considerations and perceptions of life, would become an ally of immeasurable worth.

Wondering at the change that had, within the instant, come over the Westerner, Gordon made bold to ask:

"Don't you admire that electric sign?"

"Do you mean its artistic beauty?" parried the Westerner, who, now and then, would drop away from the vernacular of the range.

"Yes, and—" hesitantly. "Its possible significance."

"Well!" The Westerner's brow had become knitted, "Cattle has always stood for the chief industry of the West. I don't exactly relish the thought of those fellows roping and tying them. It looks like hog-tying our people."

"You refer to the Mexican?" asked Gordon.

"No, only indirectly. He but represents the means they use."

Once more the Westerner's voice was growing hard. He almost bit off the words.

"I mean those infernal liquor people. They buy up illiterates of all nationalities,—like sheep and vote them every election until now they just about control our government."

"Why do you people tolerate that?"

Gordon's voice was now almost accusing.

"You surely don't mean to tell me that the people here hold these annual carnivals in celebration of the freedom their fathers died to win, while at the same time they allow selfish interests to buy up elections to usurp government?"

"Allow it?" Over the ranchman's countenance flitted a crimson flush.

"Allow it? Why, just look for yourself! From where we are now standing can be seen the crowd before the patriotically decorated ruins of the old fort. 'The cradle of our liberty' we call it. For every man,—and they have their hats on before that shrine,—you can count **two** with their hats off before this liquor sign."

As he spoke, the Westerner, unconsciously, drew his belt a notch tighter.

"Not only that," he continued bitterly, "These people are from all over the State."

For several minutes the silence was unbroken. The new turn of the conversation had depressed them. Gordon was thinking rapidly and seriously. He had

come to the West expecting to be a citizen. The idea of becoming a mere subject, and that of usurped power, was repugnant to his whole philosophy of life. For the moment he was undetermined,—but for a moment only. Here was work to do. At least he would not recoil from duty as he saw it. Once more his thoughts broke into audible expression:—

“Invisible, spectral government! And here in the West! I can’t imagine a people like this, submitting to it.”

“We wouldn’t submit to it, if the people knew the truth,” said the Westerner, emphatically. He was now himself again, his voice even and slow. “The trouble with us is, that, whenever the other crowd needs help, some of the politicians on our side are always available. Every time the other fellows are in the minority, they manage, somehow, to divide our forces and win.”

“An old game! As old as political governments!” exclaimed Gordon. “The ancient maxim, ‘Divide and rule’.”

For awhile they stood looking into the crowd,—thinking.

“Why don’t you jump into the game?” suddenly exclaimed Gordon.

It was not so much what he said as how he said it. More he could not have said had he spoken volumes.

At once it revealed the perfect confidence of the Kentuckian in the integrity of the Westerner,—that while others might prove unworthy, the man before him would prove true. In the short period of their acquaintance, the man from the valley of the Ohio had completely analyzed the temperament and character of the man of the West. Under trial and temptation, each could trust the other.'

The man of the West understood, just as Gordon, earlier in the evening, had understood. Thus these two men,—with the slender acquaintance of one hour,—had forged a bond, which, throughout the coming years, would hold them together. As he grasped the full meaning of it all, the man of the West, as though seeking inspiration, looked long in the direction of the old fort. With his back to the illuminated electric design high above him, the Westerner turned to his companion.

"Well, someone has to do it," said he grimly.

CHAPTER II.

The episode in the hotel lobby. "Now take my advice and don't pull that thing while in such a bad humor."

WHEN they turned to enter the hotel the evening was yet young. Guests, for the most part dressed for the annual ball, were grouped about the beautifully decorated reception rooms opening out upon the wide lobby, all eagerly anxious for the moment when the orchestra, now slowly gathering upon the mezzanine floor above, should send its waves of stimulative music throughout the spacious halls. Near the main entrance, looking out upon the park, a few men, their hats and shoulders confetti-showered, lounged upon the leathern chairs in satisfied contemplation of the assembled beauty of the city and countryside. Greetings and introductions, interspersed with merry laughter, added to the rumbling, noisy conversation. As the deep-throated strings of the bass-violin signaled the opening number, there was a riotous goodnatured scrambling as gentlemen, bubbling with good cheer, hastened here and there in search of the

partner whose name was written first upon their programs.

Suddenly and at once, every voice in the assembly hall was hushed. Where they happened to be, as if moved by one common impulse, men and women halted, their faces turned in wonder toward the main entrance. Across its threshold had, that moment, leaped a young girl. She could not have been more than fifteen years of age. Her voice wonderfully rich and full, filled the wide halls, as, in the low, slow, musical accent of the South, to the accompaniment of the silver mounted mandolin, suspended upon strands of ribbon from her delicate, finely chiseled neck, she sang the dreamy lines of *La Poloma*. About her there was neither affectation, boldness nor embarrassment. With easy grace she edged her way through the listening, wondering throng, her simple, modest gown of soft clinging material, betraying, with each step, her slender form. The skirt hung low over little feet encased in sandals of the same color, tied with ribbons over the high instep. Her light golden hair, falling in waves upon and below her shoulders, framed a face of clear transparent skin and regular features. Eyes of deep blue looked pleadingly into those of her own sex. From the girdle at her waist hung an open, beaded bag. As those of the audience, accepting this invita-

tion to bestow some tangible proof of appreciation, dropped pieces of small change into the beaded receptacle, the girl's cheeks would dimple her smiling acknowledgment.

She had traversed the full length of the hall and had turned to retrace her steps. For one instant her voice faltered. Her eyes, now fixed upon the entrance door, gave first a look of startled surprise and then of fear. Her mouth, a moment ago wreathed in faint lines of cheerful appreciation, now became cold and hard. For an instant she stopped. Then, as if resolved to go on, determined to face some threatening danger, she proceeded, onward, towards the door, singing some weird ballad of the hills, with its haunting melody.

So intent had all been upon the girl, few had noticed the entrance of a man who stood now unsteadily at the door. With riveted gaze he watched the singer. He had forgotten, or else, in scorn of those about him, had neglected, to remove his hat. Either to support his unsteady footing, or to prevent egress, he stood, one pudgy hand braced against the frame, his tall heavily proportioned body almost filling the doorway. His hat of white straw perched upon the side of his head, contrasted strangely with a mass of blond hair falling riotously over his forehead. He looked the part of the well preserved,

though dissipated, ward boss, conscious of his power, physical and political. Upon the wide bosom of his soft shirt sparkled a diamond of unusual size and brilliancy. Though he was slightly intoxicated, his tailored clothes of white flannel, well fitted to his tall muscular frame, were spotlessly clean. In the front of the lobby lounged several men who, either through personal acquaintance or by reputation, knew the intruder as Boss Beerman,—gambler and politician. These men, doubtless observing Beerman's inebriate condition, refrained from accosting a personage of known violent temper, and capable, through the power of his political associations and influence, of harrassing all who chose, or dared, to oppose him. Sure of immunity from the consequences of his own misdeeds, he was, at times, quarrelsome,—even brutal.

The girl approached within a few paces of the doorway and halted,—undecided whether or not to proceed further.

"Come right along, little birdie," said the man in the white flannel suit, in a thick, unsteady voice. Now he grinned tauntingly at his frail victim.

"Can't you see that your dear uncle is waiting for you?"

"You are not my uncle!" retorted the girl, with scorn and alarm.

"Well! your dear auntie's husband then," he corrected, taking a step or two toward her. "True she has cut my acquaintance—"

"Let me by," she interrupted pleadingly. Seeing there was a little space between her tormentor and the door, the child darted toward it.

With a catlike spring, Beerman was beside her, his rude grasp jerking his victim almost off her feet.

Thoroughly frightened at finding herself in the grasp of a man whose cruel character she knew of, the girl could not restrain a scream of terror.

At this moment the Westerner, closely followed by John Gordon, entered the doorway. At a glance he took in the situation. With one leap he was at the girl's side. Out shot his arm. His clenched fist landed sharp and hard on Beerman's jaw. The next instant the burly form of the girl's brutal assailant lay in a heap upon the tiled floor.

"What's the trouble, Miss?" questioned the Westerner, tenderly, as the girl, now free and quick to grasp an opportunity to escape, had raced toward the open door.

At the sound of his voice she hesitated for a moment, looking into the face of her protector, undecided what to do. For a moment only she stood waiting, then, as if all fear had vanished, her eyes fixed upon Leigh's strong, smooth-shaven face, she ran

straight up to him, lifting one slender hand to his shoulder. The Westerner's eyes had never left the prostrate form before him. At the first sign of returning consciousness he gently pushed the girl toward his companion, Gordon, who had stepped forward, ready for whatever the situation might require.

"Gordon!" he was saying, his voice even and low. "Reckon you had better take this child away from here a minute." Then to the girl, his eye still fixed upon his enemy who was now slowly lifting himself from the tiled floor—

"Don't be afraid, Miss! We are not going to let anybody hurt you."

The words were hardly spoken when the man on the floor, the gloom now scattered from his foggy brain, straightened up. Used to broils from which he invariably had emerged the victor, and conscious of his strength and prowess, Beerman, eyes glaring with ferocious hate for this stranger who, having humiliated him, was now so recklessly braving his vengeance, rushed madly upon the intruder. With studied, careful precision, the Westerner's clenched fist shot out, piston like, and landed squarely between Beerman's eyes.

With any ordinary man the blow, driven with such tremendous force, would have ended matters. As

the Westerner at once realized, he was dealing with an unusual situation. His antagonist had stopped still, his feet spread wide apart. The thick skin of his forehead gathered in corrugated folds. Dazed by the impact of the blow, his body bent forward, wavering under his strong, determined, will in a supreme effort to regain his equilibrium. His left hand was now clutching the back of the heavy divan, —his right hand jerkingly reaching for the weapon in his hip pocket.

Leigh had drawn back his arm prepared to strike once more. With fine discrimination he was waiting for Beerman to readjust his disturbed mental faculties. Around the corners of the Westerner's mouth flitted a faint smile of grim confident humor. His hat had fallen to the floor. A few strands of dark wavy hair fell across his forehead, reaching almost to the high arched brows.

As the man before him, his face distorted with anger and pain, reached for his weapon, the Westerner's jaw set hard. In a flash his right hand shot quick to the holster hanging from his belt, and out came his revolver held close to his hip,—the muzzle trained direct upon Beerman's heart.

"Now, Mister!" said Leigh, "take my advice and don't draw that thing while you're in such a bad humor."

The words had a tone, kindly, almost bland, that only emphasized the resolution behind them.

With head bent slightly forward, his eyes were boring into the flaming, bruised ones of Beerman, who, carefully weighing his chances, slender at best, still rested his hand upon his undrawn weapon.

"Just imagine some fellow about your size sliding into eternity, feet foremost," said Leigh, in sharp admonishment, "and then take your hand off that gun and—do it quick."

The last words were spoken slowly and with an emphasis not to be misunderstood. There could be but one meaning. The Westerner had reached the limit of forbearance. Not another instant would be granted to chance.

The air was charged with the tenseness of the dramatic situation. Onlookers held their breath, or gasped in shuddering expectation of what seemed certain to happen with the pressure of Leigh's determined finger upon the trigger. Handsomely dressed women, far in the rear and beyond sight of the contending principals yet within easy hearing of the sharp metallic command, held their hands to their ears or stood helplessly awaiting the ending of a scene pregnant with tragedy. Whether Beerman's power of resisting the punishment he had received was at last broken, or he had read in the steely

glitter of the eyes of his conqueror the helplessness of his situation, was but a matter of conjecture. The strong muscular hand slid from its hold upon the weapon. The heavy eyelids closed as the muscular frame staggered for a moment. Then suddenly his form collapsed and fell in a heap upon the floor.

On guard against any possible cunning treachery, his hand still touching the butt of his revolver, Leigh stepped quickly forward and deftly slipped the weapon from the hip of his fallen foe. Quietly he threw out the cylinder and, extracting the cartridges, counted them, stepped to the doorway and flung them into the street.

"It's all right now, Miss!" he said, brightly, to the girl, the moment he was beside her.

During the few tense moments the child had stood clinging to Gordon, her eyes fixed upon her protector. She had picked up his wide hat and his hand was now extended to receive it, when she observed a dark blotch upon one of the knuckles.

"O, Sir! You have hurt yourself!" she cried, letting the hat fall as she touched the injured hand with both her own.

To the girl the incident had been a harrowing trial. The reaction, now setting in, was beginning to tell upon her. No sooner had she clasped his fingers than tears, bravely restrained, sprang to her eyes.

Overwhelmed with gratitude, the child hysterically kissed the red, moistened bruise.

Leigh, whose nerves, in the presence of danger, were like steel, began, in the presence of a girl's tears, to feel a strange tightening at the throat. As in a dream, his free arm slipped, gently, around her shoulders, and his tall form bent low as he, reverently, kissed the mass of golden hair. For an instant, through her tears the child looked up into his face. Then, with maidenly impulse, she threw her arms about his neck and kissed him impulsively.

Everyone saw and understood. Safety in the presence of this strong, earnest man, where, but a few moments ago there had been danger, had touched the springs of this child's gratitude as nothing else could have done.

Leigh stood transformed. Into the eyes, but a few moments ago, charged with the hard, steely glitter that would give, or take, life, had come an expression, tender, in keeping with the moistened lids that covered them. Cheeks, that had hardened, and whitened, with the set jaw, now reddened with the blush of exquisite compassion. Unfolding the slender arms, while still holding her hands, Leigh led the girl to a circle of women, nearby.

"Will some of you take charge of her until we can decide what is best to be done for her?" he asked, in

an aside. "I hardly think she need now be alarmed. I've thought it over and that ruffian is not to bother her anymore."

Leigh was not in the slightest degree embarrassed. He 'had thought it over,' this Westerner, and, in that big spirit born of the West, needed but an instant to decide. Intuitively they all understood, as the child understood, that in his simple way he was declaring himself her protector. They knew he would keep the faith. At one stroke he had won the confidence of them all. Responding to his earnest, sturdy honesty, everyone was eager to aid.

The sensation of the evening over, the orchestra was now filling the hall with music, and the dancers, for the most part the younger of the group, were gliding over the smooth floor. Occasionally couples would cease dancing and gather around the older members, who had taken immediate charge of the girl. She had told her story,—one of the tragedies only too common to human life, yet so little known or heeded by men, or women, too busy as they are with their own immediate cares.

Her name was Marjorie Wayne, an orphan, then living with an only relative, an aunt, wife of, though living apart from, the man who had, but a half hour since, so brutally accosted her. Born of refined and cultured parents, her father, once prosperous, had

met with financial reverses. In his despondency, he had taken to drink. Within a short time the remnant of his fortune was swept away. Forsaken by those who, in his days of prosperity, had sought him; shunned by those who had encouraged his dissipation, he had taken his own life. Gifted with a voice of rare promise, the girl, though at that time less than fourteen years of age, had developed unusual musical talent. Crushed and broken under the weight of her grief and humiliation, the mother had survived the father but a few months. To the girl, the only child of these once prosperous parents, was bequeathed a legacy of poverty. Her one living relative, an aunt, though earning but a modest living as teacher of music, had welcomed the girl to her heart and home. Together they were fighting for a livelihood upon terms and under conditions unequal towards women; unequal for no reason other than that, in the providence of God, they were born—women.

Still their trials were not without compensations. The warm, loving nature of the younger of the two, responding to the naturally affectionate disposition of the older, had, to an extent, filled the voids in the lives of each. Together they could have been happy, except for the persecutions of the man to whom they, both, strenuously refused to accord the relation of kinship. From the limited income of the older, sup-

plemented by such sums as, upon occasions, the girl earned with her voice, the two were slowly, yet surely, saving enough from their earnings, to take them to one of the larger cities of the East. There in a new field of their chosen profession, they hoped to find wider opportunities. Then, too, there was the hope that the girl herself might, in the East, receive advantages and training such as her talent seemed to warrant.

All this she told to her new found friends in a way, simple, yet earnest. Her voice and manner was composed. Though she was fully aware that her recent assailant was still within the hall, and possibly within hearing, there was nothing about her to indicate fear.

Of Beerman she spoke little. Once a man of promise and attainment, he had been thrown with unscrupulous men, such as at the time dominated public affairs. Become degenerate in morals, he became associated with men engaged in low, political schemes and had advanced in political power. Now, though he was the proprietor of one of the most famous, or rather most infamous, gambling resorts of the West, he had about him a following to be feared and an influence in politics to be reckoned with. For reasons of weight his wife had refused longer to live with him. It was only when under the influence of

drink, however that he persisted in annoying the wife who refused longer to recognize him, or the girl who declined to know him.

The Westerner had listened to her story to the end. About him were gathered many of the gentlemen, in conventional evening dress, yet somehow his loose, cowboy clothes seemed not out of harmony there. In her recital, the girl had reached for his hand and was now carefully wrapping the bruised knuckle in a dainty little handkerchief she had detached from her girdle.

"Oh, that isn't worth bothering with," he protested smilingly, though with no effort to withdraw his hand. Then—

"How were you to get home, Miss Wayne?" he asked.

As though his question had re-awakened fears, for the time forgotten, the girl looked, furtively, toward the open door.

"Always my aunt has called for me, but tonight she is ill, and, as the streets are so brilliantly lighted, we thought I could—"

"But you can't," Leigh interrupted. "Mr. Gordon and I will accompany you." Then, addressing all within hearing:

"Folks! I am Robert Leigh. You can find out all

about me at the hotel office. I often stop here. My friend and I will see this little lady safely home."

There was a finality in the way he said it that could not be questioned. It had occurred to no one that, up to this moment, none had thought of his name.

Leigh and the girl strode toward the front entrance. Beerman, due either to the liquor he had been drinking, or to the rough experience of the evening, sat in a half stupor. His face was bruised and swollen, from the effects of hard usage. His eyes glared, from the dark rings encircling them, at the several men lounging about the lobby. Gordon, as if on guard against any further trouble, had remained leaning carelessly against the door.

"Goodnight, gentlemen!" saluted the Westerner, about to pass out into the street.

At the sound of that voice the dazed mental faculties of the victim of the short but decisive encounter, for a moment asserted themselves. With a deep growl, Beerman made a futile attempt to regain his feet, only to drop back heavily to his seat. His vanity, too, had been injured and in the presence of these men, some of whom had, for years, known him as one to be feared.

"Don't speak to me," he managed to growl in reply to Leigh's cheerful "goodnight." It was a

last effort upon the part of Beerman to retrieve his waning prestige.

"Don't worry! I didn't," quietly retorted Leigh.

The girl between them, Gordon and Leigh, friends of but two or three hours, yet so strangely confident of each other, passed out into the night, the one from the Valley of the Ohio wondering how and in what way the character of the other might next reveal itself. Mingled with the crowd still thronging the streets, the Westerner, forgetting the unpleasant episode of the evening, laughed heartily as revelers showered confetti upon the girl at his side. Good-naturedly pushing his way, his manner was easy, even graceful, and his voice, rich with the charm of the plains, was pleasingly entertaining. Arrived home, the girl, her thoughts diverted, and even cheerful, under the spell of the humor of her escort, was now beginning to feel the reaction of her trying experience. With trembling voice, she had begun to express her gratitude, when the Westerner interrupted—

"Let's not talk of it until tomorrow, Miss Wayne," he begged. "We've some good friends in this town. In the morning we're coming to see you, and your aunt,—on business."

"Oh, I hope you will!" she exclaimed, at once accepting his arrangement as final.

Little did the girl at that moment know the purpose of this high-souled man who, used to the big reaches of the West, was himself big of heart.

That night, when alone in his room, Gordon sat out the hours until early morning in deep thought. Love of adventure,—a desire for a broader view of life,—wide areas and wider field for work,—had impelled him to come West. Like a panorama, the incidents of the day, and more particularly of the evening, passed before him and he wondered what strange new developments would come with tomorrow. As the noise of the merrymakers died slowly away, his thoughts, leaping the distances of mountain and stream, crossed the silvered moonlit river and became fixed in the valley,—his valley. No matter where destiny might call him,—no matter where his footsteps might lead him,—he was still of "the valley."

Leigh, hewn of rougher, though no less finely tempered, material, wondered not at all. Unwrapping the girl's handkerchief from his bruised knuckle, he spread the soft little square of linen upon the writing table—and smiled.

"The poor little helpless thing!" he exclaimed. His face was grave as he sat thinking,—aloud.

CHAPTER III.

“They need to wake up, Mr. Gordon, just as I needed to wake up.” The trip to the ranch.

THE trip to the ranch was interesting. Not alone did it afford Gordon an opportunity to study his new-found friend. It gave to his mind a new conception of the immensity of a country of which his loved “Valley” was, after all, so small a part. All his days had been spent in communities where population had become dense. Even in the country one could not get beyond the view of many homes. But here were great reaches of cactus and low-growing mesquite, extending, beyond the range of view, in all directions, with no living thing to break the monotony of the endless, brushy, landscape save the cattle grazing upon the succulent grasses, native to the country. True there were an almost countless number of long-eared rabbits. These would crouch low in the luxuriant growth, motionless, with ears folded close. Much like the ostrich, they had strange notions of hiding.

At one time, as the car skirted a low range of hills, the Westerner commanded the driver to stop. A

dead calf lay out upon the open plain. Beyond, peering through an opening in the thicket, a lone coyote had sought shelter from the noise of the motor, wondering, no doubt, what strange foe had come to his secret haunts to thus disturb his stolen repast. The keen eye of the ranchman was not to be deceived. Reaching for his rifle, always part of the equipment for an overland journey through the long reaches of the West, he brought it to his shoulder.

"If I don't get him in the eye, I won't claim him," he remarked, confidently.

The sharp crack of the exploding shell, a slight rustling of the thicket,—and the charm of quiet. It was the first of these marauding species, out of captivity, Gordon had ever seen. Curiosity, however, was dulled by surprise and wonder at the fulfillment of what he had thought an idle boast.

"Well! It's your prize," said Gordon, as he observed the red flow from where the eye had been.

The ranchman only smiled, but there was something in the smile that fixed attention. Once more under way, Gordon stole quiet glances at his companion, wondering just how far, in a contest with enemies,—human enemies,—of civilization, the Westerner might go. More than ever was he convinced that, if he be given the chance, here was a man, capable of many things.

In deference to the brevity of their acquaintance, Gordon had asked few questions. Yet, with each moment of their easy, intimate friendship, the Westerner grew more interesting. Their conversation had so far developed that Leigh was a native of the State, grandson of one of the early pioneers, graduate of the State University, unmarried and thirty-four years of age, and that the "little pasture" he had spoken of as his possession, contained more than two hundred thousand acres. Compared to the big farms of less than six hundred acres back home, two hundred thousand acres under one fence, seemed, to Gordon's mind, an empire. Leigh had spoken of it in his usual modest way, and as though such large holdings were the rule more than the exception.

It was late afternoon when they drove into the wire enclosed lot, surrounding the "home place." Here the foreman and his interesting family lived. The house built of plain boards, with thatched roof, nestled comfortably, in the shelter of a grove of live oaks. In the lot, chickens, thinking now of peaceful slumber, resented by loud cries this invasion of their wonted quiet. A hound pup, with the curiosity of his kind, nosed the arrivals. Save for Gordon, his welcome was genuine. Nor was his protest of this stranger's right to hospitality less earnest. According to his youthful, canine, reasoning, here, no doubt,

was a person who did not belong upon the "place." As guardian thereof, it became his plain duty to growl a protest. Beyond the lot, pigs were making noisy carnival. Cattle, feeding at the troughs, would turn, looking askance at the strange, panting, hooded thing with its big round eyes focused upon them.

The exhaust of the car had warned the inmates of the house of the approach of visitors, and the wide swinging gate stood, opening a welcome. Beside it, the foreman waited to receive whomsoever might it be. On the low covered porch of the house, were grouped his wife and several children.

"Hello, Richard," greeted the ranchowner, cheerfully extending his hand. "Let me make you acquainted with Mr. Gordon."

"Howdy, Robert," replied the foreman, after cordially shaking hands with Gordon. "How's everything in town?"

"Oh, all right, I reckon. Folks all well?"

"Yes, all doing nicely, thank you. They're all out there waiting for you," nodding in the direction of the house. At this, the Westerner turned, lifting his hat as he called a hearty, "Good evening."

Further introductions soon followed. Gordon pleasingly observed the relationship existing between the Westerner and his employe. The welcome was simple yet cordial. Upon his part one might have

guessed the Westerner a friend rather than an employer. The evening meal announced, all gathered around the long oval table.

When all were seated, Gordon, who was about to attempt some pleasing remark, observed that every head was bowed. Instinctively he did the same.

He had not expected this—in the midst of wild uncultured nature. But the words of the host surprised him most of all. Rarely had he listened to a supplication couched in language so beautiful or spoken in tones so impressive.

The blessing invoked, the meal proceeded quietly, interrupted with but little conversation. All were intent upon the pleasing task before them. Gordon, who had not expected such religious devotion, began a mental analysis of the head of the family. Here was a man of muscular build yet evenly proportioned to medium height, eyes of deep blue shaded by heavy arching brows, hair long and unkempt. His face, save the nose, eyes and forehead, was covered by a thick, bushy mass of beard, sunburned to a light colored tan. The high forehead, the clear, expressive eyes bespoke a reserved intellectual force barely to be glimpsed in the short period since his arrival. Clearly

he was out of harmony with Gordon's conception of life in the wild West.

"Do you have good schools out here?" he at last ventured to ask.

"Oh, yes," promptly.

"How close?"

"Only twelve miles."

Only twelve miles to school! And in a tone one might use of a school located in the next block in town!

O, the wonderful distances of the West!

Night settled over the land as though completely exhausted. To John Gordon, used to the late noises of the city, the stillness seemed almost audible. In the morning, just as the sun began to peep over the low hills, Gordon and Leigh had breakfasted and were off, together, as afterwards they would fight the common dangers—together.

During the ride to the ranch Leigh had not mentioned the incident in the lobby of the hotel, nor had he referred to the girl on whose account he had become embroiled with Beerman. Gordon, respecting his friend's reserve, had waited for the Westerner, if so inclined, to speak. This he had not done. Once or twice, his thoughts no doubt anchored upon the

incident in the lobby of the hotel, or upon problems growing out of it, the Westerner had grown strangely quiet. Some mysterious force seemed at such times to have enveloped him. At each awakening from these reveries he would apologize for his momentary forgetfulness, then immediately enter upon discussions of incidents of ranch life, old to himself though new and interesting to Gordon.

With the morning, however, this reserve had vanished. Whether due to some decision reached during the quiet of the long night, or because, now in the saddle they were to themselves, he did not say. They had just emerged from a narrow trail leading, windingly, through a stretch of low wooded pasture bordering the river, separating his ranch from that of his neighbor, when the Westerner, his hand extended, turned to his companion and said,—

“Mr. Gordon! I have taken time to think over your suggestion and have decided, as you put it, to ‘jump into the game.’ No people need to be oppressed unless they wish to be oppressed, and it’s a mighty sorry bunch that’ll stand for it. I now thoroughly understand how unscrupulous men, organized for their own selfish purposes, succeed in debauching and over-riding both the people and the government. The masses of our citizens never hear the truth and, even among those who do hear, few are inclined to

protest unless some of their own people are hurt. They need to wake up, Mr. Gordon, just as I needed to wake up."

They had loosened reins that their horses might nibble at the tender spring grass. The Westerner had thrown one leg over the pommel of his saddle. Gordon, who had not failed to note the emphasis with which Leigh had spoken the last sentence, quietly and confidently waited for him to proceed.

"That little girl we helped," Leigh proceeded, generously according to Gordon an equal credit, "would not have been molested had that fellow been sober. Had the State not encouraged him to drink, the chances are he would have been all right and possibly a good, upright citizen. That is why I let him off easy and didn't strike the third time. I knew he was not altogether to blame for being drunk. Of course," now his brow furrowed, slightly, "Of course, had he pulled that gun, why, you know, it would have been different. He couldn't expect to be excused,—then."

"Well!" encouraged Gordon, as the other seemed to finish. "Go on! What you are telling me is interesting. I think you acted very generously, but what about the little girl?"

"What about her—how?" questioned the other, his face slightly coloring.

"Why, what was the real cause of the poverty that compelled her, while endeavoring to earn a livelihood, to subject herself to such chances of insult. Her parents, you tell me, were at one time prosperous and happy. The father died a drunkard, broken in fortune, and health. The mother, improverished, lingered but a short while. All the girl inherited was poverty and an unequal struggle for education and existence. She had every right to expect plenty. Very well! Now who are to blame in her case?"

"That's just what I was saying," insisted the Westerner. "We pay little or no attention to these wrongs until they hurt someone we care for."

Gordon could not help remark the earnest manner in which his friend was now discussing the subject, nor the personal character it had assumed. He knew why,— He knew someone for whom Leigh cared had been hurt, and that now he was ready. Nor did he longer wonder how far the Westerner would go; he had seen this man tried. There would be no limit save the one of right.

What he did not know was, that upon the morning after the exciting scene in the hotel, the Westerner had visited his banker and other friends and, with them, had called, as he had promised to do, upon the girl and her relative. He had arranged, though not without protest, that the girl and her relative were to

depart at an early day for the East, the child to be educated as had been planned. Leigh's only stipulation was that, her education finished, the girl should return to her native state. To this, in the simple way of a child, the girl had agreed, but only upon the condition that he would visit them at least once each year.

The Westerner had simply, yet promptly, put into effect his declaration of the evening before when, holding both her hands, he had led the girl to the nearest circle of women and said, simply,

"I've thought it all over. I hardly think she need now be alarmed. That ruffian is not going to bother her any more."

CHAPTER IV.

John Gordon, lawyer. Beerman swears off.
"It's all an infernal lie! The vile treacherous stuff will break you down, just as it has broken me!"

RETURNED to the city, Gordon, fully decided as to his immediate plans, lost no time in obtaining offices. Above the doorway soon appeared the modest inscription,

"John Gordon, Lawyer."

Leigh, declaring that everyone subject to the law should have a reasonable understanding of its limitations and authority, leased the adjoining suite, intending to devote his spare time to study. Then, too, in addition to his ranch, he had acquired extensive holdings in the city, and due to rapid growth and speculation, more or less characteristic of Western cities, these were demanding increasing time and attention. In this way these friends, so strangely thrown together, grew closer with the advancing days until, their business and professional relations now become so completely interwoven, it was decided that they form a partnership.

Since the episode in the lobby of the hotel, the years had also wrought changes in Mr. Beerman. Unscrupulous and tyrannical in his political dealings, his subtly planned, and cunningly executed, intrigues had forged him rapidly into power until now he was at the head of an organization, able through the use of unlimited money and careful manipulation of certain interlocking, political devices, to compel obedience to its imperious will throughout the State. Courts and Legislatures alike felt the heavy hand of this invisible, hidden power, as it flowed from the spectral throne of selfish greed, until now the people's government had drifted from the moorings of the Constitution, designed for their protection and safety. The will of Beerman had become tantamount to law. Did he but dare,—were it not for the aftermath———?

That evening, years ago, when, in the lobby of the hotel, the Westerner had so completely subdued him, was still fresh in Beerman's memory. But a short hour had elapsed, following the departure of Leigh and Gordon from the hotel, the girl between them, when Beerman staggered through the door and out into the night. Humiliated and broken, he roughly pushed his way through the crowded streets. Only a few hours ago passersby had saluted him with professions of respect. Among them were many who

would step aside to make way for this man whose power, physical and political, they dreaded. Now all had changed. Upon every hand there was careless indifference, even derision. Several of his recent associates passed by, their faces wreathed in smiles at his discomfiture. At these his face, battered and bruised, would flush with angry resentment. He had been drunk many times and, always before, these very men had either carefully avoided his presence or quietly tolerated him. He could not understand this indifference, even contempt, because he did not know how completely the wireless of his underworld had spread the news that he was no longer invincible.

Courage, like fear, is often contagious. The only reason why he had been held so long in dread was that no one, with both courage and physical prowess, had put him to the test. In the arena of his social world a new idol had appeared. Ever fickle of allegiance, those who had once courted his favor were now ready to pay homage before another shrine. Few knew or cared who he might be but all were ready to follow the new star. Instead of rallying about their old leader, as before, when in frequently recurring broils he had been one of the principals, they were even now hastening in the direction of the hotel curious to catch even a mere glimpse of the man who, report, exaggerated with each transmission, said, had

vanquished their recognized champion with scant effort. Baffled by this strange situation, his already distracted mind became more and more wrought up until, choking with shame and resentment, Beerman began to swear at the passing crowd.

An officer, one of his satellites, who but yesterday would have compelled the throng to open a way, rudely grasped him by the collar, threatening, unless he desisted, to arrest him. Completely astounded at this insolent insubordination upon the part of one who owed his position to his political power, Beerman could only stare into the eyes of this man who thus threateningly addressed him. Accustomed to command, he hardly knew how to obey even this officer of the law.

Slowly the truth dawned upon him. Somehow he had been deposed. This person, to whom he had been in the habit of giving orders, was now demanding obedience and with stern insistence. Under the pressure of this new situation, he was crushed. Mechanically, he turned, slowly, away. His eyes fixed straight before him, hardly caring where he was going, he arrived exhausted at a saloon, long the meeting place of questionable characters. Here he had often held council with political leaders; had often distributed campaign money, or, for the purpose of controlling elections, had bought, paid and mobilized the illi-

terate votes. It was here that plans were laid to debauch and control juries. The headquarters of a noted "jury fixer," unscrupulous men knew how to approach him and how justice could be defeated—justice that should flow from the people's Court House! Here the liberties of men were tried before the bar of the saloon, just as property rights were juggled in the hands of chronic, unscrupulous jurors, staked out and ready, when called, to violate their oaths and sell their souls for a price.

Swaggering through the open door, Beerman strode straight up to the bar. Men, standing around or sitting at the tables, deliberately turned their backs upon him. A few scarcely nodded their heads and passed out. The proprietor, his silent partner, listlessly pulled the cork, placed the customary cold beverage before him, and turned away. The fallen hero, scorning to heed these studied affronts, reached eagerly for the bottle. Holding it before him, in a voice that all could hear, he slowly read the label:

"The beer that builds you up."

He made no effort to drink. His eyes, turned toward the plate glass mirror, across the bar, saw, visualized before him, the wreck of his once proud, impressive countenance. Battered, discolored, the jaw swollen, the eyes encircled by deep, dark rings. Reflected in the mirror, he could see the men about

the room, their faces wreathed in smiles of careless contempt. In the past these same fellows had vied with each other for a single glance of recognition, or a word of praise. Now it was as though a tramp, his room more to be desired, had intruded his presence upon them. All about him were men who but yesterday, to please him, would have hesitated at nothing; tonight they were ready to rend him to pieces.

Beerman, stung to the quick, was now completely sobered. His eyes were glaring at the group reflected before him. His jaw set hard. Such was his indignation that, intent upon denouncing the whole crowd as cowardly scum of society, bought and paid for during every election like so many mangy sheep, he half-turned upon them. Yet his lips did not move. The thought came to him that a few malted and distilled dollars, carefully distributed, would, at any time he might choose, bring them back into his fold as cringing and servile as they were now defiant. And who could tell! These fellows might, for the moment, repudiate him but certain others, men high in the councils of invisible government,—dared not.

At this thought his powerful shoulders straightened up. Looking disdainfully at the group pictured in the glass before him, he grasped the neck of the untouched bottle—

“The beer that builds you up!” he shouted, his voice betraying the disgust of his embittered soul.

Once again he read aloud the label,—

“It is all an infernal lie!” he roared, “the vile treacherous stuff will break you down, just as it has broken me!”

With all his might he dashed the bottle, with its untouched content, into the mirror, and strode, unhindered, out into the darkening street.

CHAPTER V.

A time when men, and women, also, must be tested,—not in their bodies but in their souls. A discussion of suffrage.

ABOUT manly courage there is a certain magnetism that is irresistible. Especially is this true when modestly concealed, as in the case of the Westerner. Since the incident in the lobby of the hotel he had been the recipient of many congratulations. To these he would reply, that his altercation with Beerman was nothing more nor less than a practical demonstration of an established truth. That, "all other conditions being equal, John Barleycorn, with a poisoned body and clouded brain, cannot compete with muscle, and mind, kept strong and clear, as God intended them."

"Had he not been a drinking man," Leigh would say, referring to Beerman, "there is no telling what might have happened." Then he would add, mentally, that had Beerman been sober, the girl would not have been molested and there would have been nothing to happen. At this thought he would drift into reverie. Had she not stood in need of help, he

would reflect, then in all probability he might not have known her, and he would find himself trying to solve the perplexities of life, out of which, often it occurs that pleasing reflections evolve from harsh experiences.

Due to a rapidly increasing clientele, there was about the offices of Gordon & Leigh an atmosphere of busy industry. Then, too, it had become the custom among certain prominent citizens, students of social and political problems, members of the law-making tribunal and others interested in the public welfare, to meet in these offices for the purpose of discussing questions of public policy, local, State and National. The right of women to vote, and the political activities of the invisible government, had begun to awaken thought and arouse the public conscience. Men, prominent in business and professional life, never before known to take part in public affairs, were beginning to understand that there is something more in life than money, and nothing worth while if, to be had, only at the price of self-respect.

The problems around which much discussion centered, was that of suffrage. Upon this subject Gordon and Leigh, though agreed upon all other questions, were not in complete harmony. Leigh favored a ballot to be exercised by men only, with no restrict-

ions other than those of age, residence and citizenship. Gordon stood for the equal right of men and women, based upon an educational qualification. Upon the requirements of residence and citizenship, it is true, they were agreed. Each insisted that to permit foreigners to vote upon a simple declaration of intention to become citizens, as is now done in many states, was not only repugnant to the very purposes of our government, but dangerous; that the public policy of the country might be determined by the votes of aliens who, though having declared their "intention" might never, actually, become citizens. During close elections, with the national result hinging upon the vote of a single state, and even there the lines closely drawn, a foreign nation, shrewdly conducting a subtle and far reaching policy, might easily colonize a sufficient number of "declarations of intention" to influence our national policy. Surely, both Gordon and Leigh insisted, no person should be permitted a voice in determining the policy of our government except, as against the designs of all other sovereignties, he become a citizen and thereby a part of the government, whose policy he seeks, as an elector, to direct.

"I just cannot quite consent to the thought of our women mixing in our dirty politics," protested

Leigh, one day when, with Gordon, he had been discussing suffrage.

"Are you willing for our women to be 'subjects' of dirty politics?" asked Gordon. "And, besides, why should there be anything unclean about the privilege of voting? If the highest privilege of citizenship is so corrupt and degenerate, then what are we to think of a government flowing from it? If our politics are so unclean, as you say, and we both know that your conclusions are correct, then men have made it so. That being true, has the ballot, limited to our sex, proven a success?"

These two had great respect for each other's opinions and enjoyed these friendly discussions. Leigh, until recent days, had given but little thought to this subject. As busy men are prone to do, he hesitated to disturb established systems.

"The whole question is one of right and justice," continued Gordon. "It hinges upon the original design of the Creator. Had he intended woman for an unequal purpose in life, He would have endowed her with unequal intellect."

"Men used to believe women were not equally so endowed," smilingly reminded Leigh.

"But you, Leigh?" Gordon questioned. "Surely you don't—"

"No, indeed!" quickly responded Leigh, "in either

sex; intellectual force is much a matter of training and opportunity. The world is at length beginning to understand, and properly value, woman's capabilities. Intellect is not to be measured in terms of sex but rather by those of individual worth."

"Then why not extend the franchise to intellect without the limitation of physical form?" demanded Gordon.

"Government, to be safe and sane," he continued, cannot be grounded in human bodies. It must rest upon the firm foundation of the human mind. This principle, the State now recognizes. Thousands of men, human beings, as far as physical form is concerned—men whose bodies were designed in the same pattern as is your body, and mine,—are denied the ballot and for the reason that they are insane. Thus the State recognizes, and enforces, the principle that, to participate in government, intellect is the supreme, essential, qualification. Any other doctrine, we are all bound to admit, could only result in ultimate ruin."

The Westerner had strode to the window and was looking out upon the street.

"I am not unmindful of the force of your reasoning, Gordon," he replied, without turning, "but women, **our** women, have had no training along political lines."

"Had our men?" demanded Gordon. "Did the oligarchy of despotism recognize capacity for self-government in our sex until intellect, restless under oppression, asserted its right? Men, prior to that time, had had no training along political lines, as you state it. And why? Not because they were not capable, but because they had been denied opportunity to share in government."

Leigh was still silent,—still looking out upon the busy street. Gordon arose and came to the side of his friend. Across the street men were lounging in, and about, the front of a saloon. From the window could be seen the beautifully carved mahogany counter with its silvered railing;—upon the shelves the polished glassware; bottles, labeled in gilt, stood temptingly before men, many of them in rags, leaning against the bar. At the tables other men were drinking and playing games, while, still others, empty glasses before them, leaned over in drunken sleep or, staring into space,—seeing nothing. Standing just outside the door, an infant in her arms, a haggard woman; beside her a boy, his hand clutching her worn skirts. Woman and boy,—wife and child of some husband and father,—were fearfully, pitifully waiting,—praying that the weekly wage might not all be squandered,—that even some small share might be saved for the wretched home. The

boy,—emaciated, weak, barefooted. The mother and wife, stooped, gaunt, her eyes heavy with her trials, stood in shoes, ill-shaped, barely held together by the worn strings.

Behind the bar, the proprietor—strong, contended. His clothes of the latest style covered a frame vigorous, well nourished. In his shirt front, a diamond. Upon a finger of his left hand a gem of priceless value. In his pockets, the bread,—the shelter,—the clothing,—the very soul of the homes of hundreds of his misguided patrons. In his steel, fire-proof safe lay deeds to, and mortgages upon, property. Hidden deep in the recesses of that same safe were certificates of qualified voters. Not content with his customer's earthly goods he would use these certificates to usurp their government.

"Can you imagine," slowly questioned Gordon, as he and his friend contemplated the tragedy being enacted before them, "Can you imagine, Leigh, of women, **our women**, supporting, by their ballots, a system such as we are now witnessing? Can you conceive of women,—our women, poisoning the minds and bodies of their sex, or of our sex, just because a few unscrupulous men, for reasons of private gain, demand it?"

The Westerner still made no answer. Looking across the way, his brow had become deeply wrinkled.

As upon another occasion, his lips had compressed into thin lines and into his eyes had come, once more, that hard glitter.

"Some men profess to believe," continued Gordon, "that, the ballot given to women, our kind,—our women, would not go to the polls,—that another kind would go. That supposition is absolutely untrue. **Our** kind will defend their homes, even wayward husbands and sons, under any and every condition. As to the others, the law may stipulate that no one,—man or woman,—engaged in unlawful activities, shall be permitted the use of the ballot."

"Just read that sign over the door across the street," Gordon continued, "One quart of that poison is capable of reducing a dozen men to temporary insanity. Its continued use is certain to lead many of them to the asylum, or penitentiary, and their dependent families to starvation or perdition. And for what earthly good? Yet we men, with our professed superior intellectual attainments so essential to the use of the ballot, are not only permitting this horrible thing but legally sanctioning it."

"Not alone that," continued Gordon, after another short period of silence. "In order to maintain the tremendous expense of our asylums, jails, penitentiaries, orphanages, poor houses, criminal courts and rescue homes,—the direct product of such institu-

tions as we witness across the street,—we tax the property of women, yet deny them any voice in determining the right, cause, or amount of the tax, nor the manner in which the revenue, when collected, shall be expended.”

Gordon had ceased speaking. Leigh had turned from the window and stood, arms folded, his eyes looking into those of his friend. So forcibly reminded of an injustice, he was now ready to aid toward correcting it.

“It don’t end even there, Gordon,” Leigh began, as his friend concluded, “It is unjust to deny woman a voice in government and at the same time tax her property, even for necessary and legitimate purposes, but to tax her,—penalize her,—for the purpose of maintaining the human wrecks, flowing from the miserable business of her most unscrupulous, intolerant enemy, is nothing short of an outrage!”

Gordon and Leigh were now united upon all public questions.

Busy with the demands of an increasing practice, neither of the two friends had given much thought to Beerman, who had advanced rapidly in political power until now he was at the head of the organization that for years had dominated the politics of the State. What was their surprise when, one afternoon,

Beerman strode into the office, affably extending his hand. There was about him nothing of the swaggering, violent character as shown upon the occasion of their former meeting. His step was firm, the eyes clear and piercing. His muscular form was erect and confident.

"Good evening, gentlemen!" he said, in friendly greeting.

Gordon, nearest to him, took the proffered hand reluctantly. He did not approve of this man's political methods, nor could he easily disassociate him from the drunken brawler of the hotel. Yet there was something about his forceful personality that commanded recognition.

Since the night of his experience with the Westerner, Beerman had not touched liquor. His mental faculties, naturally active, freed of the debasing effects of drink, had quickly asserted their forceful, potential power, until, now, he was the acknowledged head, and leader, of an association of men including in their number many of the most successful business and professional citizens of the State. That he should so vigorously oppose the use of intoxicants where his own interests were involved, yet unscrupulously wield the power of his position and influence to force it upon others, even to the extent of debauch-

ing men and methods, was beyond Gordon's conception of the fitness of things.

The Westerner's introduction to this man had been most violent. Yet, if he harbored prejudice it was carefully concealed.

"Good evening, Beerman," he responded cheerfully, "How do you come on?"

"Very well! Very well! I happened to be in the city and thought I'd like to have a chat with you." Beerman was smiling as, looking directly into the eyes of Leigh, he seated himself in the rocker the Westerner had offered him.

"In fact, I've been wanting to thank you for that drubbing you gave me," he added, quietly drolling the words.

Leigh, at this careless allusion to a circumstance that had been fraught with serious possibilities, could not repress a slight frown.

"It was not I that did it," he protested, calmly. "You had undone yourself before I met you. Of course you are a man of too wide experience, Mr. Beerman, not to understand my meaning."

"I do understand!" declared Beerman with emphasis. "That is just why I owe you an acknowledgment. It was rather rough awakening but it gave me a good look in on booze. Whiskey deserted me just when I most needed a friend. Since that evening

I've thought it over and cut the stuff out. Happening in the city today, I concluded to call and tell you of it."

But the Westerner knew this not to be the only, nor in fact, the real purpose of this visit. Both he and Gordon were aware that, for years, Beerman had not touched liquor. They knew also that, due to the methods of the organization of which this man was the directing force, an organization which had become the invisible government of the State, there was a growing, and considerable unrest. They were, also, aware that Beerman's organization had no politics of its own; that it was actuated by the sole purpose of perpetuating the business it protected. Loudly professing the creed of the party dominant at the time, it cunningly schemed to appropriate the party machinery and control elections.

Beerman, too, had been notably successful in enlisting men of power and influence, some of them secretly. These were relied upon, in emergencies, to divide the opposition so that the "invisible government," never divided, might continue to rule.

It was no surprise to either Gordon or Leigh when, in a careless way, their visitor remarked that, since his arrival he had heard some talk of Leigh entering the race for the State Senate.

"I hope it's true," he declared, evidently inter-

ested. "We need good men there. It just now occurred to me that I might be of some assistance."

"In what way?" queried Leigh, who could have no doubt it was for him the remark was intended. Gordon had been pressing him to enter the race and had broached the subject to several friends. As yet he was undecided.

"Why, in several ways, I hope," replied Beerman. "To begin with, elections, or rather campaigns, are expensive,—that is, where there is serious opposition," he hastened to add. His words, though simply spoken, may have meant many things.

"We are trying to build up the business interests of the State," he continued, "and need broad-gauged men in the Legislature. The pay of members is contemptibly insignificant,—not enough to cover expenses. The dear people refuse to increase it, it is true. We business men, however, wish to do the right thing. We don't think it's right for legislators, working for the public good, to sacrifice their time and money, also."

There could be no misunderstanding of the meaning his words were intended to convey, nor could there be any doubt as to the purpose of this, cunningly planned, interview. Yet this astute politician had so carefully phrased his remarks, delivered in tones of frank earnestness, that exception could not

well be taken. Having approached the line as far as he dared without some sign of encouragement, and as if all further thought of legislative candidates had passed from his mind, Beerman began to talk of other matters. After a short while, with a hurried glance at his jewelled time-piece, he arose to depart. As he reached the threshold of the door, he paused. In a tone, as though something had almost escaped his mind, he remarked,—

“Oh! If you decide to make the race, let me know, won’t you?”

Next morning there came a call over the phone. It was Beerman.

“Say! I’ve been thinking! We are about to select a firm of attorneys to represent us in this section and it has just occurred to me that the work might be right in your line. Can’t understand why I didn’t think of it yesterday while in your office.”

“Why, that’s very good of you,” said Gordon, who answered the call. “What would be the character of the work? You’ve never employed an attorney here, have you?”

“No!—But we are establishing sub-departments at central points in the State,—extending our business you see,—”

“Yes?”

“It will be perfectly legitimate of course, and will

pay fairly well,—Oh! I judge about ten thousand a year. But we can talk that over—we are not tight-wads.”

“And what would be the character of the litigation?”

“Why—O!—we know how to take care of our friends. Chances are you wouldn’t have much to do,—may not be necessary for you to appear in court at all. We only wish to protect our business. What we need is advice and some one who can command influence to watch out for our interests.”

“Business or political?”

“Well! You know that now-a-days unless you have a pull—”

“O! you want someone with a pull, do you? We are trying to practice law, Mr. Beerman. You are looking for someone to practice influence. The employment doesn’t appeal to us.”

“What if we raise the—”

“That would not alter the case.” Gordon was not of a disposition so difficult to arouse as Leigh’s, and his last words came with a snap.

“Some people may not know it, but there is something more in life than money.” He was about to hang up the receiver when—

“Say! you have surely got me guessing.”

“Well, Mr. Beerman, you haven’t got me guessing.”

The biennial campaign was under full headway. Elections were to be held for Governor and for members of the Legislature, both Senate and House of Representatives. Issues, or rather the issue, was being hotly contested. One familiar with the history of the State, with its wonderful heritage of freedom bought at such tremendous sacrifice, would have expected that deep-throated orators and spell-binders might have sought inspiration from the deeds of heroes gone. That with courage, drawn from the lessons of the past, they would stand for the rights of the people, present and future. Upon such as these, the rostrums throughout this empire of Western civilization, had been strangely silent. As far as concerned the dominant party, the dead past had buried its dead; while the party itself had buried deep the rock-ribbed Jeffersonian doctrine that “Government should flow from the people and for the people.”

True, party leaders loudly declaimed, as did party councils emphatically resolve, for this principle of government, while cunning politicians, through intri-

cate combinations and secret interlocking devices, destroyed its substance. During many years selfish interests through the use of illgotten money, had ruthlessly controlled elections. Having debauched the electorate, they did not shrink, whenever possible, from controlling the people's elected officers. The politics of the State had become, largely, one of usurpation and despotism.

The purchase, by tens of thousands, of illiterate votes had become the balance of power. The intelligent populace, disfranchised, was, now, prostrate at the feet of the irresponsibles. Once free men, they had now become subjects. Not of their own government, but of an invisible spectral power flowing from the hidden throne of selfish, merciless greed. In American history there had been but one parallel. During reconstruction the helpless South had suffered ignominy and oppression, no less outrageous, and through methods not dissimilar.

Yet there was this difference. Carpet-baggers were for the most part aliens who received small support from those of the South, who loved the South. Their oppression came as the aftermath of war,—a tragedy surpassing war itself, only to be condoned, if that could be, by consideration of the distorted state of public conscience and the inflamed state of public

temper. For a period the carpet-baggers ruled, but only through the votes of their debauched illiterate and purchased tools.

To what extent misguided zeal, and thirst for power and property, would have led them,—or, were it not for the courage of men, how deep and permanent the subjection of a worthy people, may not readily be imagined. It was a time when men, and women also, were tested, not in their bodies but in their souls.

In the present case the relentless despotism of usurpation precedes the coming strife. It is to be fought,—not with bullets but with ballots. The carpet-baggers,—humiliating thought!—are now drawn from our own people. They are flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone. Their methods,—the same as during reconstruction,—the purchase and mobilizing of illiterates and irresponsibles with a definite design to ride, roughshod, over the rights of the intelligent. Not with promises of forty acres and a mule, it is true, but with payment in cash, on, after and before delivery,—cash in “distilled” and “malted” dollars, flowing from the throne of “invisible government.”

For a long time these carpet-baggers have ruled. How much longer they may do so depends upon the

courage of a worthy people. The time has come again when "men, and women also, must be tested—not in their bodies but in their souls."

Surely, as written in the register of the old ruins, "A country that is worth dying for, is surely worth living for." Liberties won by the bullets of our fathers, should, and must, be preserved by the ballots of their sons.

CHAPTER VI.

Beerman has an audience with Leigh. The penalized innocents. "It will require just two seconds to decide just how much of a corruptionist you are."

FOR the past six years, Gordon had been a resident of his adopted State. Diligent attention to his profession, aided by the friendship of his now inseparable friend, Leigh had built up a considerable practice. Upon the lecture platform, and in the political arena, he was now known throughout the State. His stand for the right, as he saw it, had aroused many bitter enemies. Yet these were more than compensated for by countless strong personal, and political, friends. A vigorous fighter of graft, every political crook in the State was arrayed against him. This, he openly declared, was his proudest achievement, but that he would not cease until the champions of corruption had been exposed and driven from positions of responsibility.

Since their first meeting, Gordon and Leigh had been together a great deal, fighting side by side. At

Gordon's earnest insistence, Leigh had offered for election. Having completed one term in the State Senate, he was now a candidate for re-election against determined opposition. His unflinching courage, incorruptible integrity, astute statesmanship, and capacity for leadership, had appealed to right thinking people and had compelled recognition, even of those who disagreed with him upon certain principles of government. But, just as strenuously, he had aroused against him the open and secret forces of invisible power that for years had debauched and dominated the politics of the State, and, wherever possible, the cities and counties.

After his first election and but a short time before the session was to convene, Beerman had asked Leigh for an audience.

"How do you stand on all this wild legislation some of the members are proposing, Senator?" he asked, after being seated. He was lighting a fresh cigar. From his careless manner one might have inferred that matters of legislation were really of no great importance.

"Which in particular?"

The Westerner was not deceived as to the purpose of this visit and was playing for position. The thought had come to him that if he was, figuratively speaking, to take a hand in the game of politics with

Beerman, a glance at his opponent's cards might aid him to use safer judgment. That this man had some special object in view he could not doubt. That the afternoon would develop it he felt certain. During his campaign for election, although the firm of Gordon and Leigh had declined his offer of employment, Beerman for some unknown reason had not opposed him. Whether due to a desire to avoid an open rupture or whether Beerman felt secure of a sufficient number of friends in the law making tribunal, was not known. An astute politician of acknowledged and unusual ability, Beerman's policy, at times, challenged understanding. Yet his judgment was seldom at fault.

As the Westerner parried his question, Beerman smiled pleasingly.

"Which in particular?" he echoed. "Well! Don't you think it would be difficult to be specific? They are all bad enough."

But Leigh was certain that his visitor could particularize if he chose, and that he would,—but in a way to disguise any real concern. He knew he had only to wait.

"Now as to that Utopian theory of Mr. Gordon's, that you are to try and write into the statute books—that scheme to have the wealth created by the convicts, less expense to the State, paid over to the

wives and children of the imprisoned husbands and fathers, why, it is utterly impracticable, Leigh. No doubt Mr. Gordon's purpose is good but we can't afford any luxury like that."

"Why not?" Gordon had conceived the idea Beerman was referring to, and, together he and Leigh had worked out a plan by which the State convicts were to be classified, according to the character of their activities, and the net proceeds of their labor, after deducting all cost to the State, would be paid to their dependent and unfortunate families. They had drawn a bill which Leigh was to introduce in the Legislature and, if possible, enact into law. If, in leading up to any measures in which his secret organization was concerned, Beerman had selected the proposed prison reform law as one of indifferent interest, he was soon to discover his error.

"Why not?" Leigh again demanded as the other pondered a reply. "Surely the State has no right to penalize those who are innocent of any wrong?"

But Beerman was reflecting. He was beginning to understand that this man was in earnest. Some of his political friends had for years been profiting from the penitentiary system, and there was, even now, an agreement that, in return for their co-operation and support, his organization was to so manage

that the exploitation of the prison system was to be left undisturbed.

As Beerman glanced into the eyes of the Westerner, visibly aroused to a subject of evident concern, he found himself conjecturing as to what extent the influence of this man, with his bluff, earnest manner, might have upon the Legislature. He found himself wondering what would happen should Leigh insist upon raising an issue of such vital importance.

Up to the present moment he had given the proposal but little thought. Even now he had mentioned it more with a purpose to disguise the real object of his visit, than through any desire to discuss its merits. Quick to discern threatening clouds above his political horizon, he was, already, calculating the chances of such a measure being enacted into law. To the general public it might, and doubtless would, appeal as an act of justice, long delayed,—towards a class of helpless innocents. To him, with his knowledge of the unwritten history of that department of government, there was a much deeper significance; that, in its last, and true, analysis, Leigh's proposal, among other reforms, raised the question of whether the State should adopt the just and humane policy of paying to the innocent wives and children of prisoners, the profit, arising from the labor of such prisoners; or continue to permit it, through various busi-

ness devices, to find its way into the pockets of a close clique of scheming, heartless, politicians. Covering a long period of time these men had been thriving upon the labor of the State's convicts. Grown arrogant and powerful, they had, for years, been able to demand of candidates for high public office, a promise of non-interference with their profitable practices.

For an instant Beerman wavered. Might it not be the part of wisdom,—political wisdom,—for him to grasp this opportunity to align himself with an issue, certain to appeal to the public sense of justice? Might he not capitalize public sentiment? Or, would it be still wiser for him to continue his support of a system of wrong and oppression that assured him certain campaign contributions. To the equitable, humane side of the question he gave not a moment's consideration. His interest was purely political. His politics were easily defined,—protection for an industry, inimical to the public good,—an industry that would wither and die, if planted in the soil of decency, justice and humanity.

“Don't you think the State has the right to arrest, and convict, violators of our penal laws?” he ventured to ask.

It occurred to him that nothing might be lost by developing whatever argument, or facts, the West-

erner might have. He could then prepare, if need be, to counteract them.

"Certainly!" responded Leigh. "Should men violate the law, the State not only has the right, but it is its duty, to arrest and convict them. In certain instances the State should confine them in the penitentiary. It should require them also to perform reasonable labor. But, Beerman, what about their wives and children who have **not** violated the laws?"

"Unless," he hastened to add, "it is a crime for a woman to marry, or a child to be born."

Beerman had thrown himself, lazily, back in the big arm chair. Apparently in deep thought, he was gazing at the ceiling. As he offered no reply, the Westerner continued,—

"In many instances we can't avoid depriving these helpless unfortunates of their husbands, or fathers, as the case may be, but, beyond this unavoidable hardship, what right has the State to inflict an additional penalty upon them, by confiscating their support?"

"I am not admitting that we do," Beerman's voice had a tone of resentment. As the managing director of the invisible government that fixed and controlled public policy, Leigh's words seemed accusing. Indeed they might be considered personal.

"You are bound to admit it," insisted Leigh, who

had not failed to note the inference Beerman's words might convey. "Beyond the authority to imprison violators of the law and to require them to work, the right of the State does not, and cannot, in justice, extend. The wealth flowing from their labor, less expense, is the rightful property of their innocent dependents and should be paid them. The State may have the **power** to withhold it, but it certainly hasn't the **right** to do so. As I see it, the first claim against a man's labor is that of bread, shelter, and clothing for those for whom he has voluntarily agreed to provide. Under our law, should a man, of his own accord, abandon his family, the State will punish him; but, if the State, in its majesty, forces him to abandon them, we punish his family. If, for the public safety, the State takes charge of a man, it is done for a public purpose, and we but hold him in trust for his dependents. To forcibly withhold from his family the wealth his labor creates, is nothing short of confiscation. We would not dare invoke such a policy against land, for property is powerful and would not submit to it. Should the public have need for your home, or mine, it has the right to take it,—provided it pays for it; this is our tribute to the strong. Though they, themselves, have done no wrong, we see fit to confiscate the bread of helpless wives and children of imprisoned men,—and we do

confiscate it; this symbolizes our contempt for the weak."

"But Senator, don't you think that most of those families, you are seeking to champion, are better off without such husbands?" questioned Beerman.

"No more as applied to men in prison than to a lot who equally deserve to be there," answered Leigh. "But even though that which you intimate be true, the duty of the State is in no degree changed. The question, 'who has the first right to the bread earned by the convict?' still stares us in the face,—unanswered, we, as a great, strong, rich State, or the convict's family, struggling, poor, and often starving?"

"How do you know that any profit arises from convict labor?" Beerman challenged. "In fact the record shows quite the contrary."

"That is not the fault of the convicts," insisted Leigh, with emphasis, "Labor has a value. Any practical business man, having absolute control of a given number of strong, able men, should, and doubtless would, employ them at a profit. Statistics show the average cost of feeding, housing, clothing and guarding the convicts, to be, approximately, eighteen dollars each per month. Several hundred are kept at work, in the shops, as mechanics. Others are employed in building trades. In the open market such labor

would earn an average of three, or four, dollars per day. Surely there can be no valid reason why the State should not be able to realize, at least, a fair return. Of course, Beerman, it can't be done under political managers, appointed for reasons of politics, regardless of their business experience or qualification. It is equally impossible, so long as our penal system is permitted to be used by unscrupulous politicians for purposes of exploitation. Still in either case, it is not the fault of the convicts, and to make their families suffer for it is nothing short of an unspeakable outrage."

"Why, there are two, or three, thousand units of common labor,—those who work in the fields or upon the roads!" Leigh exclaimed, almost accusingly. "Under capable supervisors, these should easily command, each, from thirty to forty dollars per month. Yet the 'record,' you speak of, shows them to be operated at a loss. I am opposed to the lease system. The State should never return to it. I am, also, opposed to the use of this labor for private gain. A profit undoubtedly does, or at least should, arise from it. Who gets it, I am not prepared to say. I do know, however, that it should be paid to those who are rightfully entitled to it,—the helpless, innocent, dependent wives and children of those miserable men behind the walls."

"Every time a farm is purchased, or a building erected, out of convict proceeds," Leigh continued, as Beerman sat, silently smoking his cigar, "it represents just that much taken by the State, whose wealth is too great to count, out of that which is rightfully due to the convicts' wives and children,—whose poverty is too plain to hide."

Beerman was still leaning, lazily, back in the chair, his lips drawn in a faint smile. As Leigh, in his quiet, yet forceful, way proceeded to unfold these views of a situation which, if generally known, would prove unbearable to the public, Beerman, in his ever cunning brain, was revolving plans to defeat any possible intermeddling upon the part of either the public or the legislators. The plums falling from this particular tree were rich. Indeed this blood money had already laid the foundations of a number of considerable fortunes. And besides: Only by virtue of the good will and support of this powerful political ring, could he hope to maintain his invisible government. Together they must either stand, or fall. He had been wondering just how much this man knew, or what he might be able to prove, and had made up his mind to encourage a full discussion of the subject then, and there.

Leigh was talking of conditions that might prove exceedingly troublesome; that is, if the public could

be aroused to the truth. Beerman's political experience had taught him the value of letting sleeping dogs alone.

"Senator!" he observed, his smile now vanished, his brows knit, "what you are saying is very interesting, but, the books show that our penal system has, for years, been losing money."

"Of course they do!" almost fiercely replied Leigh. "Under the existing conditions they could not well be permitted to show otherwise. But, if they were allowed to disclose the actual facts, and circumstances, surrounding the purchase of land from certain men, tipped off in advance to secure the options and hold up the State, the books you speak of would tell quite a different story."

"Who do you think gets the money?" asked Beerman, carelessly flipping the ashes from his cigar. "That is," he hurriedly corrected, "assuming that the practice you refer to exists."

"Exists?" demanded the Westerner. "Now Mr. Beerman, I have no desire in the world that our personal relationship be other than pleasant, but I should regret to be forced to believe that you would come here except in a spirit of candor. I am sure that you, personally, do not profit from the proceeds of the penitentiary system. I am equally sure that you are familiar with the names of those who do.

In the interest of humanity, justice and clean government those men should be exposed and this outrage suppressed. If there is a man in this State who can accomplish this reform you are the man. Don't you think, Beerman, that you should rise above all political considerations and do this much for the State?"

Beerman's face flushed. He made a slight movement as if to depart. Leigh, gently placing his hand upon his shoulder, continued.

"No use trying to protect those fellows all the time, Beerman. Of course I have mentioned but a slight fraction of what is, and has been, going on. I have not said anything about how the products of the system have been sold; haven't touched on certain leases and land transactions. As to that railroad deal, I don't know as I ever intend to say—"

By this time Beerman was choking with rage. His cheeks blanched white as he reached for his hat, intending to bring the interview to an end. Leigh smiled pleasantly.

Leigh had risen to his feet and was now leaning against the window sill, his hands shoved deep into his pockets. Beerman slowly settled back into his seat. Apparently arrived at a decision, he was delving among some papers he had taken from his pocket

in search of a letter, so he stated, giving a report of the whole transaction.

"Oh! Never mind it!" advised Leigh. "In fact I would rather not see it. You would be put to the necessity of explaining why such reports are made to you. As a private citizen you are not supposed to have anything to do with the control of the government."

"Now tell me," and Leigh again settled himself directly facing his visitor, "tell me just why you called today. When you have done so, I wish to tell you something of the horrible tragedies resulting from our prison system to which, I am sure, you have never given a moment's thought. I will frankly admit that I want you to help me in the work of righting a wrong that should no longer persist among civilized people. Of course I know how you are connected, politically, and that your associates will, in all probability protest. Yet I wish to impress upon your mind that, no matter what our environments and political alignments, there are some things that we, as men, cannot yield to the demands of others. Now, what is it you wish to discuss with me?"

"Why, nothing in particular, Senator," replied Beerman, evasively, "I just called to discuss matters,—legislative matters, and see if upon some of them we could harmonize our views. Upon one ques-

tion of public policy you and I are wide apart, still there is no reason why we should disagree upon other matters,—matters of vital concern to the business interests of the State."

"None, whatever!" frankly responded Leigh. "Even upon the question to which you indirectly refer, I grant you equal right of opinion. As to your methods,—they represent a quite different matter."

"I reckon so, Senator," admitted Beerman. Then—as though he had decided the time favorable as another—

"Senator!" In his turn he was looking straight into Leigh's eyes, "May I speak frankly, and have your promise to keep that which I have to say, in confidence?"

"Certainly ." The answer was prompt and, as was the Westerner's custom, direct. "I want you to be frank. You may be sure I shall be also."

"What chance is there, Senator, of lining you up with us?"

"None whatever."

"Under no circumstances?"

"Impossible, Beerman! It is not now so much a question of your business as it is of usurpation of the people's government. As for your industry, thousands of men care very little one way or the

other. However, they are not willing to permit you to name our public officers, and determine the character of our government. You insist upon doing this. In fact you cannot otherwise hope to exist. It has now reached the point where the people are confronted with the alternative of either surrendering their government entirely to you, or of abolishing your business."

For a long time they sat in silence, Leigh waiting upon Beerman, who, with gaze fixed upon the open window space, sat revolving in his mind the expediency of aiding the Westerner in his plan of prison reform. Should he do so might he not thereby capitalize his gratitude? At least, he might succeed in modifying what seemed certain to promise a stubborn and determined warfare upon the invisible government of which Beerman was, at once, the slave and master.

"All right, Senator, if that is the way you feel about it," Beerman conceded, tactfully, "Now what can I do towards helping along that prison reform scheme you were speaking about?"

"You can render its accomplishment certain if you will," Leigh replied unhesitatingly. During the moments of silence he also had been thinking, and it occurred to his mind that, as he had refused Beerman the co-operation he had desired, it could

now hardly be deemed consistent to ask his assistance. Still, the Westerner was asking nothing for himself. He was appealing for a class of helpless unfortunates. Humanity and public right would surely justify him in brushing aside all other considerations.

"Has it occurred to your mind, Mr. Beerman," he began, "that the waste of the labor of our convicts, operates, not only in a tremendous expense to the State but as confiscation of the bread, shelter and clothing of helpless wives and children of men behind the walls?"

"No, Senator! I had not thought of it in that way. As convicts, I take it their activities become the right of the State."

"That all depends upon whether we are Christians or Barbarians. There was a day when the wrath of the Caesars extended to the families and slaves of all who offended; when the decree of the despot, who took the life, or imprisoned the body, of the victim of royal wrath, commanded that the wife and daughters of the offending subject be sold into worse than slavery; that his house be razed to the ground, his forests cut down and his chattels destroyed, or sold for the benefit of the royal tyrant. Civilization professes to have suppressed such iniquity. The question arises—has it really done so? Certainly as re-

flected by the penal system of this State, it has not done so."

Leigh was doubtless speaking from the depth of earnest conviction. Beerman, at first inclined to treat the whole subject of reform as visionary and inexpedient, was catching the contagion of the speaker's tense sincerity. Deeply interested, he sat drinking in Leigh's words. In slow even tones they fell from the lips of this man who, until recent years, he knew, had given but little thought to affairs other than those of personal character. Awakened to the larger issues of life, Leigh had determined to aid, as best he could, in correcting conditions growing more and more oppressive.

"Beerman!" proposed Leigh, "I wish to ask two or three questions."

"Go ahead, Senator."

"Has the wife or children any claim upon the husband or father?"

"Certainly they have. Their claims come first."

"Save only the right of the Nation in its hour of peril," corrected Leigh. "And not even then in defiance of a man's home obligations. For example our pension system. This we will admit is an act of justice and right that no civilized nation could well ignore."

"Now then!" continued Leigh, "Does it conform

to the principles of right and justice for the State, just because it is powerful, to punish helpless women and children merely because they are weak? A man may commit a crime against society; society feels outraged and sentences that man to the penitentiary. So far we are within our rights. To this extent we cannot well avoid the tragedy that falls upon his dependents. The husband and father is torn from them; disgrace ostracizes them. The weeeekly, or monthly, pay check is no more; want raps at the door. Though they have committed no wrong, society shuns them. The mother, untrained for the unequal fight upon the battle fields of our commercial or industrial life, slowly succumbs under the tremendous weight. Under the pressing cry for bread, the daughter retires from school. She asks for employment behind the counter. A convict's daughter, she is not wanted. The little children, looking once with hope toward the school house, are struggling, their bodies half clad, to appease the call, persistent, gnawing, of their shrivelling little stomachs. That which once promised useful citizenship has become a waste of society. The good squeezed out of them, they are much like the slag discarded from the furnace. They, also, have been subjected to the fire that scorches and burns, yet does not refine. Not in all instances but only in too many. We should bear

in mind, Beerman, that all the dependents of convicts are not of the lowly. Many of them were once refined. Yes, thank God! many even under their trials and oppressions, are refined still. And Beerman,"—here he laid his hand heavily upon the other's shoulder—"After a while,—after a while,—we go down in our pockets,—just a little ways,—to build rescue homes. Half in sympathy,—often in contempt for these waifs of society, we wonder whence they come,—never asking why, nor how many, the State itself, through its system of ruthless confiscation, has provided; confiscation of bread the convict husband and father earns, over and above the expense to the State,—bread, by every rule of justice, reason and humanity, that is the rightful due of these penalized, though innocent, unfortunates."

Beerman sat silent but not unmoved.

"My friend!" said the Westerner kindly—"For we ought to be friends upon this one ground at least,—Character is the highest, chiefest, asset of a State. We cannot afford thus profligately to waste it. Has there not been enough of women's tears, resulting from our barbarous, mistaken policy? And to think, Beerman! This thing is going on in this State of ours, wonderfully potential in its wealth, and permitted by a people naturally the most generous and chivalrous in the world."

"How would you remedy it," asked Beerman, despairingly. He had been wondering how the Westerner had secured so much information. The secret control of this department of the government had for years been an underground issue in the politics of the State. A certain powerful clique of politicians had come to consider it their choice and particular slice. Candidates for high public office had been furnished facts and requested to disclose the truth to the people whose support they were asking, but none had dared to risk the certain opposition of a few men whose interests were bound up in a policy of legislative non-interference. Between this clique and the interests represented by Beerman there was complete harmony. Secretly they supported the invisible government, which, through the use of a part of its ill-gotten money, debauched the elections and controlled the State. Neither could stand unless aided and protected by the other. Both would fall if this man, backed by John Gordon who was the true author of the proposed reform, was permitted to throw the light of truth upon these secret operations.

As these thoughts seeped into Beerman's brain he began to shake his head, in disapproval. Yet he wanted to temporize,—to negotiate. The thing to do was to avoid, if possible, an open rupture. If this

could not be done and a legislative investigation ordered,—well! there was still the Governor!

Though Leigh had indulged in some slight hope that an appeal for relief of the oppressed and helpless innocents might win, the result was neither more nor less than what he had expected. The situation was disappointing. By nature an optimist Leigh had been unwilling to believe this man altogether heartless.

“Does that mean that you are going to oppose righting this horrible public wrong?” he asked as Beerman negatived his plan.

“I shall have to negative the plan, Senator! It would mean ruin!” replied Beerman, positively.

“You mean it would ruin the interests you represent?”

“Well! You may put it that way, if you like.”

“Then at least we understand each other,” said Leigh. “Let me get this clear. You insist that the State in order to profit a few ruthless men, shall continue to be the incubator of the vice its laws prohibit. That your particular industry shall stand upon a foundation builded of the broken hearts of women and the blasted hopes of children. I hold that any industry that cannot stand upon humanity and justice ought to die in any civilized society.”

But the wily politician was loath to yield. Leigh's

words were no longer gentle and his brow had contracted in deep furrows. The moment was fraught with possibilities it were best to avoid.

"Why, Senator! In the past you were not antagonistic toward us. What has happened?" Beerman's tone was at first chiding and then appealing.

"Several things!" responded Leigh. "You,—for one."

The Westerner had not intended it that way but with his words came the vision of a young girl in this man's grasp, and his face flushed. With difficulty he pulled himself together. Beerman was staring out the window and may, or may not, have noticed the unintended allusion.

"Of course, Mr. Beerman, you know what I mean," Leigh corrected. "Fate has thrown us together and after a long sleep I have at last awakened to the facts. I realize that the most serious of these facts is the man who is facing me. For you personally I entertain no unkindly feeling. I wish you to know, however, that I am opposed both to your methods and to the things you represent."

"You know very well," Leigh went on, "how I have always protested against your practice of purchasing and mobilizing the illiterate and irresponsible voters of this state. We both know that it is done for the purpose of perpetuating your business,

which, if left to the will of our intelligent people, would be suppressed by an overwhelming vote. In plain language the election of our public officers, and the determination of our public policy, is controlled by your purchased votes which have become the balance of power. All else having become subject to it, even intelligent understanding and expression, it follows that the power, visible or invisible, that controls the illiterates has become our master and hence our government. This could be accomplished only through the disenfranchisement of the people by the use of the distilled and malted dollars of the industry you represent, precisely as your organization is now, and has for years, been doing."

"But Senator!" insisted Beerman, "we are doing it only in self defense! We must protect our business."

"Against whom?"

"The damned people! If we didn't hold them down they would vote us off the face of the earth."

"That is just it," replied Leigh, "The great big question confronting the people of this State is not confined to the injury that flows from your business but, towering even above this, is the one of citizenship. According to your own statement, in order to protect your business as you put it, you are compelled to dominate our government. This can have

but one meaning,—that the people can not permit you to remain and at the same time enjoy the right to govern themselves. Except they do govern themselves they, necessarily, become subjects of the power that governs them, which, in this instance, is your industry."

"Not alone that," he continued as the other made no response, "Your business is not an agency for building up character. To the contrary it is a most potent one for breaking down the standard of our citizenship. It is neither moral nor educational; nor does it stand for the ideals such as intelligent men and women seek to attain. Our Constitution invokes the blessing of Almighty God, and declares that all power is inherent in the people; is founded on their authority and instituted for their benefit. Your organization invokes the damnation of poverty and distress, and declares that all power shall flow from your invisible, spectral government to the people. This is the price you are charging as 'protection' for your business; it is but a part of the cost the people are paying, and it is an outrage, without a parallel, in the history of free governments."

Beerman still remained silent. Often had he listened to words of protest. Just as often had he smiled his indifference. But now the smile would not come. This man now facing him was in earnest

and any attempt at amusement might prove illtimed. He had confidence in most men but,—up to a certain point only, and he was wondering, as against the influence that could be brought upon him, just how far Leigh might go. The Westerner waited for the other to speak. When he did not—

“Beerman!” The voice of the Westerner was hard, piercing, deliberate. “The time has come when the people are confronted with the alternative of either banishing your industry from the State, or, of hopelessly surrendering this government to it. To remain, you demand the surrender of our citizenship. Aside from all other considerations, the price is too high for any people to pay and at the same time preserve their self respect. You and your invisible government must go.”

“Thank you, Senator.” As Beerman arose to depart he offered his hand, which Leigh, cordially, accepted. Started toward the door he half turned and, as if he had abandoned all thought of further discussion of pending legislation, he remarked regretfully:

“I had rather expected to discuss that proposed prohibitive tax on transportation companies, but I am afraid you are not quite in the humor today, Senator.”

He smiled good humoredly at the Westerner who had accompanied him to the door.

"You must not think me in ill humor, Beerman. I am not. I have at times an earnest way of viewing matters that is often misleading. Still I have no wish to appear gruff. What about that tax?"

"Why, didn't you read of it in the morning's press? The public is resenting it as an unwarranted interference with free interchange of commerce and an outrageous tax on industry. The daily, this morning, in a full column article, denounced it in quite vigorous terms." He did not feel called upon to say who had written the said article.

Leigh offering no further comment,—Beerman continued—

"I wish you would read it, Senator. Every business interest in the State should send up a protest."

"What is the nature of the proposed law? Strange, I've heard nothing of it."

"Why, a bill is to be introduced placing a prohibitive tax upon C. O. D. shipments."

"You mean upon all classes of merchandise?"

"Well! upon our products. I see no difference."

"Oh!" Leigh was beginning to understand,—the purpose of Beerman's visit was about to develop.

"But where will it stop?" demanded Beerman, "The next thing they will attempt will be to place an embargo upon all kinds of shipments. Though it means very little to us, rather than have that law

passed, I would, on general principles, gladly pay a ten thousand dollar bill."

"To whom, Beerman?"

"Well!—" But as he looked up the Westerner was smiling. It was a cold smile and not encouraging. Somehow that smile brought up sobering memories to Beerman.

"Just one more word, Beerman!" Leigh's voice had lost its smooth easy quality, "That agreement to treat what you might have to say in confidence, expires in just three seconds. It will require two to decide just how much of a cunning corruptionist you are!" Slowly the Westerner opened wide the door.

CHAPTER VII.

Government is no cleaner than the ballots
from which it flows! The flying squadron.
A woman's patriotism. Gordon disappears.

GORDON had been petitioned to enter the race for Governor, but declined, declaring that he was a candidate for a still more honorable office—that of actual citizenship; that if he could aid in lifting his fellow-citizens up from their present humiliating status as mere subject of the spectral government that oppressed them, he would accept it as a much greater honor than could come with the highest office within the gift of a subject people;—a people wearing, with indifferent complacency, the yoke of usurped power.

With Leigh, Gordon took the platform against corruption and usurpation. In doing so he announced these fixed, clear and definite principles:

“That, government is no cleaner than the
ballots from which it flows. That it is no
greater than the character of the power,

visible, or invisible, able to control its destiny.

“That, to purchase and mobilize the illiterates and irresponsibles, for the purpose of disfranchising the intelligent and controlling electorates, was neither more nor less than conspiracy, and conspiracy against the people.

“That, any industry that can exist only through conspiracy against the people, should not be permitted to remain in this State.

“That, a republican system of government, such as ours, can be as effectually destroyed with ballots as by bullets. Those who wrongfully use either to control are equally guilty of treason.

“That, a vote is an expression of a preference as between candidates for public office, or upon some question of public policy; other than their master's will, these purchased ballots have no preference, hence they are not votes and should not be counted.

“That, to purchase and mobilize the illiterates and irresponsibles for the purpose of controlling the election of public officers in time of peace, is no less reprehensible, and no less treasonable, than to debauch our troops and sell our defenses in time of war.

“That, men, elected to public office through the votes of mobilized illiterates and the slush fund of an outlawed industry,

are not officers of the people but creatures of power flowing from an invisible source."

The opposition retorted with pleas for personal liberty and against disturbance of vested rights. To this Gordon promptly declared:

"That, there can be no vested right when that alleged right is grounded in conscious wrong;

"That, in all history there had been but one man who might rightfully claim the privilege of personal liberty; that this State is not a desert island, nor are our people Robinson Crusoes;

"That, humanity has the right to save human life whether from drowning or from drinking."

The issues were joined and the people at length aroused. For years they had known of the practices of certain politicians. In a way they were conscious of the presence of forces of wrong. But everybody's was nobody's business. They were a busy people and had no time to devote to public affairs. Until now had not dreamed of its extent; had not realized how completely their government was being usurped and the people's will thwarted.

Few of the people in the ranks of legitimate industry, ever visited the capitol, and little indeed was

known of the operations of the secret organized forces which gather there during each session of the Legislature. The public knew that the rightful demands of the people were being regularly torpedoed, but had looked for the cause only upon the surface. In search of the deadly submarine of "invisible power," that for years had compelled the Ship of State to stand and deliver, they were now beginning to think of the subterranean depths of political intrigue. An anti-lobby law was enacted. In fancied security the people for a moment breathed. But for a moment only. Such a law could not destroy the right of petition. It applied to conditions upon the surface only. It could not, and did not, extend to operations submersible where the moist atmosphere so affected the vocal chords of spellbinders that, for the short time, they could speak only in whispers. The "government of the people, by the people and for the people," was but a dream of the past floating lazily upon a sea of inertia,—the inertia of the people themselves.

When Gordon and Leigh raised the cry of reform, it was met by a strenuous demand, put forward by certain politicians, that agitation be suppressed, and

that "business be given a chance." To this the two friends responded with the question—

"What business?"

There was no reply.

Leigh had introduced, and passed through the Legislature, a law that would have ended the scandalous conditions surrounding the penitentiary system. Its terms provided that, before that department should consummate any further purchase of lands, the price, location and description of the property proposed to be purchased should be publicly advertised and the contract submitted for legislative approval. It further provided for a correct accounting of the wealth arising from the labor of the convicts, and that, after all expense to the State had been deducted, the profits should be apportioned to "the helpless wives and children of those by whose labor such wealth was created." The press of the State had humanely and courageously supported the bill, and the Legislature, by an overwhelming majority, had enacted it into law. By its terms, land speculations at the expense of the State, would have been ended, and an act of common justice upon the part of the State, in returning to the dependents of convicts their rightful share of the labor of imprisoned husbands and fathers, would have saved thousands of

little children from drifting into vice, and multiplied mothers and daughters from even worse.

What a strange anomaly that guides us, as a people, to provide laws to punish crime, and at the same time directs us to oppress the weak, or tempt the strong, to violate the very laws we make!

At first Leigh's prison reform measure had been hotly contested. Debate at times was characterized with much bitterness. Leigh had been warned not to make certain disclosures. To this warning he promptly replied, that he had a story to tell and would tell all of it. Without evasion or omission he followed up this declaration with a complete exposure of the men who, for years, had been absorbing the earnings of the convicts and, now, their greed unsatisfied, were thrusting their hands, elbow deep, into the people's treasury.

As if in response to some secret general order, prominent politicians throughout the State, members of the invisible government, began to invade the capitol. It was the activities of these men that first awakened Leigh to the close working interlocking devices between the organized liquor forces of the State and a group of men who were profiting, even to the loaf of bread of the convict's children, upon the rich fruits of the prison system. Up to this time he had not been actively opposing the saloon. Now,

as it came to him that these promoters of invisible government, during an evening of boisterous revelry in the hotel, had declared war upon him, and for no other reason than that he had refused to shield either wrong or wrong doers, he could no longer doubt the truth. Promptly calling their challenge he announced his firm stand with the moral forces of the State, and welcomed the opposition of what he characterized as submarine duplicity. Leigh's break with Beerman was now complete.

The Governor upon demand of certain of his political supporters vetoed the prison reform law. Leigh denounced his act as against public policy, leaving open the opportunity for further land speculations at public expense. Highly profitable to certain members of the machine, the executive veto continued the State's heartless, inhuman policy towards a class of helpless innocents who, though having violated no law, were being penalized merely because they had become wives and children.

Gordon had been appointed upon a commission of investigation and was unearthing evidence involving certain prominent citizens and political leaders, found to be holding secret caucuses behind guarded doors. The leaders of the gang of conspirators had organized a flying squadron, to visit every county and town in the State. They needed reliable lieuten-

ants, men of influence, who could be depended upon to carry elections and control legislators. Money would be provided and no questions asked. Throughout the State public sentiment was now overwhelmingly against them. Still, they must control the election of the Legislature and the Governor. The orders were to stop at nothing. It was reported, and no doubt true, that they had interested several notorious characters; men with reputations calculated to overawe. One daily paper with more courage than the others, made bold to warn the champions of civic righteousness against the methods of this secret gang. Except to more bitterly assail those most responsible for public wrongs neither Gordon nor Leigh gave this any thought. Leigh declared that he knew they were dealing with vultures, not eagles, and then made public apology to the vulture.

"These men," he declared, in an address one evening to a tremendous throng, "these men pose as eagles, but I shall draw the record on them here and now, and prove that eagles cannot be hatched from vulture's eggs."

He drew the record with skill so forceful that when his speech was ended, men and women, without exception in that vast audience, hung their heads in shame in the presence of the truth now made plain and no longer to be ignored.

"It is written," Leigh had quoted, "That there was a day when to be a Roman was greater than to be a king." Then, in a voice that pierced the souls of his hearers,—“But I say unto you,” he cried, “except you have courage to throw off the distilled and malted yoke that presses down upon your necks, then the day has come in this Imperial State when to be a citizen were less than to be a slave.”

Upon the same day, in the capitol of the State, Gordon had announced that he was prepared to expose the duplicity of certain creatures of invisible power, now candidates for re-election. Excitement was at fever heat. Close to the capitol building were located the administration offices of the actual government,—the hidden power which, for its own advantage and with Cæsarian despotism, had, from its spectral throne, for years directed and dominated the destinies of the State.

“Under the terms of our adopted Constitution,” declared Gordon, “Government should flow from the people to the capitol, and not from any secret source to the capitol, and thence to the people.”

That day he had received a threatening, anonymous letter. To this he would have given no second thought were it not for an unusual incident. From time to time some unknown friend had been writing him of the secret schemes of the conspirators against

the people's government. These letters had all been typed but unsigned. At first he had been disposed to treat them as of slight importance. Without single exception, however, developments had proven the information contained therein to be unerringly true and of much political, strategic value. Convinced of the friendly purposes of the unknown ally, Gordon would forward the plans of the conspirators, thus revealed, to his campaign committee. These were given publicity and the schemes of the conspirators exposed, before they could be executed.

Seeing they could not much longer deceive the city voters, snares were laid for the country votes. Leaders, having influence with the farmers, were placed upon the pay roll in return for which devoted care they were to work the unsuspecting country voters. The silent ally sent this information and they were promptly exposed. To the end that the Legislature and Governor might be favorable to their cause, a stupendous slush fund, for the purpose of controlling elections, was secretly raised by interests both in and out of the State. A statement of the sums subscribed, and the sources from which these came, was received through the same unknown source and promptly exposed.

The flying squardon, some of its members holding offices of public trust by virtue of the votes of the

people, were instructed "to go and get the vote." Illiterates and irresponsibles were mobilized. These were, as had been the practice for years, to be voted and with a brazen effrontery unsurpassed by any band of carpet-baggers that ever feasted, during reconstruction, upon the overtaxed blood of the South. To the greater credit of the freed slaves be it said, that, at least they lived in the State where they were voted. Members of the Legislature, elected upon a platform and with votes opposed to "invisible government," were carefully listed and marked. Those who could be persuaded, in an emergency, were distinguished with a red cross. A careful roll was kept of the names of leading politicians, many of them high in the councils of the opposition. Some of these, too, bore the insignia,—not of the iron cross,—but of the red cross.

Nor were the courts neglected. The forces of "invisible government" had put the question of the constitutionality of a "statutory" act up to their general attorneys. These most learned lawyers had rendered an opinion, that, "if the Legislature places statutory upon the statutes of the State, the courts, if true to their duty, would be compelled to leave it there."—This from their own attorneys.

Through the fidelity of the unknown ally, all these facts, and more, filtered through the hidden channel

to Gordon and his committee, and were promptly denounced from the stump. Many newspapers, some of them fearful of the boycott, refused to publish even proven truths. The invisible forces had a list of these also, many of them distinguished with the red cross.

One evening, as Gordon was mercilessly exposing these shameful conditions, a voice in the audience called:

"How in the world did you get hold of their secrets?"

To this Gordon replied by telling the story of a young man, who, very much in love with a girl, offered her little brother twenty-five cents if he would get him a lock of her hair. The boy agreed, but suggested,—

"If you will make it fifty cents, I'll get it all; I know where she keeps it."

Following these strenuous days of secret caucuses and schemes behind locked doors, only to be met by prompt exposures, the conspirators were bewildered. In their desperation they began to suspect each other. Caught in the dark, between the deep-blue sea and a certain gentleman distinguished in Biblical history, they were growing desperate. Their business must be protected, but how? Through some occult science, it seemed, someone was reading their inmost

thoughts. Who it could be and the method employed had baffled discovery. What they did know, and without doubt, was, that Gordon was being regularly and accurately advised of their secret plans and operations, and that, just as regularly, he was holding them up to public scorn.

Public opinion was fast becoming wrought up. It was fraught with danger to their business. In the pulpits throughout the State the clergymen bravely delivered telling blows in favor of reform.

The press, especially the country newspapers, heretofore strangely silent, were now awakening to the hideous truth and, in terms not to be misunderstood, were denouncing "invisible government." From the headquarters of the conspirators, word was sent to the flying squadron to expend more munitions; to put the opposition to sleep, regardless of cost; to conclude a business deal with certain of the opposition leaders,—men, who for a stipulated price might agree to become tools—who could be depended upon, in a pinch, to divide the forces of the enemy. Replies came back that the submarine of truth was everywhere sending torpedoes into the very vitals of their machine; that the press, always sensitive to the touch of popular disapproval, was beginning to repudiate them and their methods.

Leigh, in a speech that had reverberated throughout the State, had declared:

"The power, visible or invisible, able to control our political rights and opportunities, controls us; the power, visible or invisible, able to control us, is our master."

"For a deserving people, such as ours, to be subjected to the lash of the ringmaster, is an outrage; to wield the lash over a free people is an act of iniquity unparalleled in the history of free government."

"The liquor traffic can not exist without raw material that must come from the homes of the country,—not to refine but to corrupt. The iron industry," he declared, "refines the raw ores taken from the ground; the sugar industry refines the raw sugar taken from the soil,—but—the liquor traffic,—an institution that exists only by your consent,—is the only industry on earth that corrupts, instead of refining, its raw material."

The Attorney General instituted an investigation. The soul of the people, aroused from its sleeping inertia, bade fair to become a tempest. Something must be done. The conspirators of spectral government were called into secret caucus.

That night, Gordon, in impassioned speech had declared:

"Any industry that can stand only upon a foundation built of the wrecks of manhood, the crushed and bleeding hearts of womanhood, and the shrunken stomachs of little children, has no right to stand at all in our Christian civilization."

At the close of the meeting, members of the audience pressed to shake his hand, bringing assurance of support. Among the number he had remarked a young woman, one of the first in the audience to reach him. There was nothing to distinguish her from the others. Yet in some unaccountable way there seemed a difference, and for a moment all else was forgotten. She had quickly grasped his hand in both her own, then as promptly released him and was gone. Neither had she looked up nor spoken. When she had gone he remembered the quick short breathing, as though from exhaustion. He was but dimly aware that she had pressed something into his hand—a tiny, compactly folded note. The demand upon his attention was such, however, as to preclude, for the moment, all chance of its perusal. Unopened he laid it away.

Arrived at the hotel and before retiring to his room, he drew the little note from his pocket, unfolded it and read of the latest plan of the conspirators,—that he was to be "removed." Another mes-

sage by way of the mystic channel, within an hour following the caucus of the conspirators.

As often he had done before, Gordon stood, wondering who this unknown, watchful friend might be. He knew now what he had not known before that night,—that a woman was doing her part, and possibly the greater part, in the work of rescuing a State. The thought pleased him. Not the thought alone but in some strange way, the unknown appealed to him.

In the morning he was to take an early train, but when called, as directed, there was no response. He had disappeared,—no one knew where. The door leading into the adjoining room, usually closed and locked, was standing ajar. There had been no noise. No one had heard any disturbance,—yet he had been spirited away. Upon the covering of the bed, blood stains told their own ghastly story of what, doubtless, had taken place in the silence of the night. At the end of the long hall near the baggage lift, and on the floor of the lift itself, other crimson spots but added to the mystery. It was certain that Gordon had been assaulted and then spirited away,—but where? Beyond the blood stains upon the floor of the lift there was no clue. The night watchman had disappeared, no one knew where. The policeman on the beat testified that he had seen and heard nothing.

* This statement was received with undisguised suspicion. It was known that the influence of the invisible government reached very far,—that, to serve its unrighteous purpose at times, even the constabulary was debauched.

Leigh, who had arrived on the first possible train, had taken charge of Gordon's room and effects. Neither Leigh, nor anyone else doubted where responsibility should be placed. Thousands of men, who, through fear of the boycott or political oppression, had heretofore remained silent, were now volunteering for the fight against this hidden, spectral power, that to perpetuate its rule over the people, would hesitate at nothing—not even destruction.

Deeper, vastly deeper, than faith in creed or party leaders is the woof of the soul—the great soul of the people. Of it individuals are but fragments. Sleeping, disunited,—impotent before all things; awakened from its stupor, united then, now and always,—the mightiest of the world's forces. Beneath the iron heel of the despot it may, and does, suffer long; political ringmasters may play with it as with a pawn—dividing to control; political Barnums, bent upon private gain, or individual power, may humbug it for a time; amalgamated forces of greed may devour its substance, debauch it of its wealth and privileges, and even crown the gold they have taken, the ruler

of the land; cunning, unscrupulous politicians, conniving with the conspirators against the people's right, may, with the distilled and malted dollars of an invisible, spectral power, debauch elections with purchased and mobilized illiterates. But, there comes a time,—when the soul of the people, blended into concrete active force, will sweep, like an avalanche, into an endless bottomless sea, all effigies of power conceived in treachery, or born of the womb of unequal right and opportunity.

For in the last analysis the people, the source of all power, are in truth the law. The world's monarchies are ruled by grant only of the people's will. The only reason why George is now England's king, is, that the great soul of that people, welded into a potential, irresistible force, preferred not to continue Cromwell's line. It was this supreme, resistless power that placed the gory crown, taken from the disembodied head of Charles the First, upon that of Charles the Second. The soul of France, grown tired of oppression, was powerful enough to behead the gentle Louis Sixteenth and his beautiful queen, Marie Antoinette.

In either case, it was but the welding into concrete force the fragments of a nation's soul; in either case that force proved determined, persistent, and, ultimately, invincible! like a tidal wave, it was resist-

less even of itself. Along its stemless tide was swept the broken forms of all that opposed. It never faltered, never reasoned, until the last thread of power was wrested from those who had abused it and restored to the people from whom all power must flow. In many instances that which was Caesar's, was rendered unto Caesar; in all instances that which was the people's was taken for the people—and more.

O, thou spirit of the people! Long may thou slumber, as politicians filch thy pockets; long seem heedless of the quenchless lust of greed, as from thy throne selfish men debauch opportunity and, with their purchased ballots, disfranchise intelligence;—purchased ballots, investing, with the supreme power of government, the ignorant, illiterate, who know nothing of their acts and care only for the price! Long art thou dazzled by the panoply of graft or of purchased office as cunning thieves flaunt their fraudulent patents of power or of property; often, even, dost thou cringe before brazen theft and usurpation. Yet, some day,—one day,—the State, which is thy soul, rises in its majesty,—in the majesty of right, relentlessly wronged; of patience scorned and sorely tried; of confidence betrayed and justice denied, and, seated upon a throne builded of its own force and power, at length deals out its own justice and satisfies its own law!

CHAPTER VIII.

Leigh aroused. "Government is not a compact of human bodies, but one of human minds. Some interesting films.

THE campaign was nearing its close. The outrage perpetrated upon Gordon had aroused the people to the ruthless character, and intolerance, of the oligarchy of selfish greed that had all but devoured them. The conspirators had been forced to resort to the mysteries of a still hunt. They were now relying upon their "flying squadron" and the slush fund at its command. With few exceptions their public speakers, once bold and confident, had retired from the field. These declared they were not criminal lawyers, nor could they longer support a cause so deeply grounded in wrong, and at the same time maintain their own self-respect.

Leigh, while leaving nothing undone to solve the mystery that surrounded his friend, had announced that he would speak in the capital city, upon "The Unwritten History of Invisible Government," and from a platform to be erected immediately fronting the building wherein was located the general head-

quarters of the conspirators. To this arrangement the police demurred. There was some talk of preventing the gathering with the use of the State militia. A committee of influential and substantial citizens waited upon the city council. Astute politicians were closeted with the Governor. The Adjutant General refused to interfere, declaring that his troops were enlisted for the purpose of preserving the rights of the people—not to destroy them. Men, with jaws set, were gathering from all portions of the State. The platform was erected and upon it that evening, in the presence of a multitude of citizens, Leigh pronounced the benediction of the campaign, and the doom of “invisible government.”

“Fellow subjects!” he addressed them. “If, God forbid, the free-born men and women of this Imperial State must, unfortunately, live under the despotism of a Caesar, let us at least demand the right to name our own Nero, and to so surround him that he may not fiddle before the distilled and malted throne of spectral power, while the liberties of the people burn and the glory of our history is extinguished.”

As he spoke, the words came slowly, deliberately, yet forcefully. One could almost hear the quickened conscience of his audience.

“I have addressed you as ‘fellow-subjects!’ ” he continued, “yet how dearly should I love to call you

'my fellow-citizens!' Still, no one is a citizen except he be an 'equal' citizen. Nor can he be an equal citizen when, with one certificate of qualification in his pocket, he is confronted, at the polls, with another citizen, holding at his command, ten thousand purchased votes, bought and paid for by interests inimical to the people."

Much like the deep voice of the sea before the gathering storm, rose the murmuring of the crowd before him.

"What equal opportunity have you, and just what part of a 'citizen' are you," Leigh demanded, "with one certificate in your pocket, paid out of your own funds, compared with the man who holds from fifty to five hundred in his safe?"

"Why, sirs," declared Leigh, "that fellow has you disfranchised fifty to five hundred times before you even reach the polls. Yet you think you are citizens. In truth you are less than subjects. You are subjects, not of your own government, merely, but of the industry that disfranchises you. Government does not always reflect the majority of the votes cast. It often responds to the majority of the ballots counted."

"Government is not a compact of human bodies, but one of human minds," he declared with emphasis. "Any man who holds public office through the

agency of ballots cast by purchased and mobilized illiterates is neither more nor less than an embezzler, without honor, of public preferment."

Plunging into the methods of "Invisible Government," Leigh charged that it had no creed save gold, no vocabulary other than its slush fund, and no alphabet save the dollar sign.

Back of the speaker's platform, Leigh's friends had erected a moving picture screen. This work had been quietly done and had attracted no special attention. Often, upon public occasions, such preparations had been made for the purpose of displaying pictures of leading candidates. Nothing unusual, yet it was to prove to be the climax to one of the most hotly contested campaigns in the history of the State.

Leigh, in the course of his remarks, had declared that, within the hour, he would expose by indisputable evidence, the duplicity of certain men, who, as he phrased it, had covered their inward hypocrisy with outward professions of civic righteousness, and, so far, had gotten away with it. His declaration had aroused much speculation. It was well known that he was not given to idle words; that he was never known to make an assertion, except with proof.

He had entered upon an exhaustive discussion of the secret caucuses of invisible power, the trysting place, as he characterized it, of political pirates,

Pilates and Iscariots, where the liberties of the people were sold like cheap calico across the counter of a village store on bargain day. Suddenly, the strong rays of the electric current were focused upon the screen. The relentless reel unfolded film after film;—pictures, accurate in every detail, even to the furnishings of the secret caucus chamber. Upon the screen were thrown photographs, lifelike and true, of the conspirators,—men, who, upon the payroll of the invisible government, had been betraying the people. With the progress of this unexpected fulfillment of Leigh's promise, the great throng, first surprised, then stung to the quick, began to murmur. Moved to shame and humiliation, men and women rose to their feet denouncing the outrages that, for a long while, had been, and were now being perpetrated upon them. The corrupting activities of spectral power could no longer be doubted.

His words charged with no uncertain meaning, keeping pace with the changing pictures, Leigh delivered a scathing denunciation of graft, infidelity, usurpation and greed.

First; a picture of the interior of "invisible power's" secret caucus room. This room was located upon the top floor of the very building before which the vast crowd was now assembled. In detail was shown its splendid furnishings and appointments.

Now, of the conspirators themselves. Before these, spread upon the mahogany table, a map of the State was being carefully studied. Reports from the "flying squadron" with long lists of candidates for the Legislature, for and against them; those known to be for them were marked with the stamp of approval; those who would be for them, though announced against them, were marked with the flaming red cross; the doubtful ones were to be classed at a future day; those unalterably against them were marked for slaughter and the orders issued.

Then came the lists of qualified voters in each county, including the number of purchased illiterates. These caused the conspirators to smile with gleeful satisfaction. One of them reached for his pocket. Drawing a bottle, he raised it to his lips. Quickly shot out the hand of the chairman,—master of all these men. Brushing the liquor aside,—

"None of that," he protested, angrily. "We need your highest efficiency, both of mind and body. How long will it take you to learn that whiskey and brains will not mix except at the price of service?"

As the reel unfolded the story,—the secret story of how, through the operation of interlocking devices, a deserving people had long been outraged, the air became charged with a fever of shame and resentment. But the merciless screen had a complete story to un-

fold. It flashed before the people, the proof that had been promised them. Upon the canvas was shown scenes of well known men, rendering unto their master the things demanded of them; delivering the people, bound in chains forged in treachery, before the throne of spectral power and selfish greed. And when they saw men,—well known men, outwardly affiliated with the people in their struggle against spectral government,—as they witnessed these accepting Iscariot's betrayal price, the resentment of the vast audience knew no bounds.

The accusing films heeded not. Others there were; pictures of men in private life,—men passing in public as tribunes of the people. One of firm step and confident bearing, entered wearing a cloak, which almost enveloped him, and a mask. At his coming all arose. Remaining standing, they respectfully awaited his pleasure.

The unknown bowed to those present then extended his hand to the chairman. Now he was talking. As he proceeded the current threw upon the screen, word for word, that which he spoke.

"Well where are we?" he demanded, irritably. "How happens it that our secrets are leaking out?"

"We don't know," replied the chairman. "We are all sworn to secrecy. No one is admitted to our caucuses except you and a few friends."

"Friends?" snapped the masked stranger, his voice angry and contemptuous. "You mean a few traitors. Don't you know that a man who will lie will steal; that these fellows who are selling the people's liberty and government to you, would not hesitate to sell you to them?"

After a careful study one by one of those present, the masked stranger continued,—

"You fellows have got to realize that we can't keep on fooling the people. Those men on the stump are telling the truth about us, and truth is bound to win. The time has come to run rough-shod over your people, law or no law. We must control your State conventions, regardless of instructed delegates, or the public will. To do this we must secure the co-operation of two, or three, more of your prominent men who stand well with the other side."

"What if their demands carry in the primaries?" this from the chairman.

"Carry! What do you mean? Haven't we got our fifty thousand illiterates bought and paid for?" impatiently. "If that can't hold your damned people down, then my kind of business had better quit sending money into your State to control elections, and your kind of men had better hunt honest jobs."

With abated breath, the vast concourse of people were wondering who this man might be. Then Fate

intervened. One of the cords that held the mask had broken. In the flash of a moment, that which had baffled recognition, dropped to the floor.

"Hell's fire!" thundered a terrified voice from the window above,—the window from which Beerman had witnessed all.

Out in the audience a feather's fall might have been distinctly heard,—so deep was the stillness.

The screen had not yet completed its message to the people. Mercilessly, it unfolded the secrets of an organized industry, which, through the agency of its corrupt, interlocking devices and secret connections, had lifted itself, from the lowly position of a creature of public consent, to that of master,—master of the State itself.

The last films to be thrown upon the canvas, were a surprise, no less to the speaker than to the gathering of people about him. During the course of Leigh's speech, some one had handed the operator of the screen, a package of films. With these were instructions that they were to be used at the close.

The outburst of indignation, following the scene of unmasked hypocrisy, had not yet subsided, when, the electric current, under the title of "What did the conspirators do with John Gordon?" threw upon the screen, a new chapter of unwritten history of the caucus chamber. Gathered about the mahogany

table, easy to be recognized, were shown a few leaders, among them well-known politicians. Others moved restlessly about the room. In letters of dripping red, there was thrown upon the screen, word for word, the conversation between the principals. Throughout the audience, this subtle suggestion of human blood brought a nervous shiver.

Word for word, the screen told of the agreement, —to do away with John Gordon. It told of the oaths of secrecy. At the close, the films threw nothing save one great question mark. From this the red drops dripped, ceaselessly.

It was the climax of a great fight and a wonderful speech. No longer could there be doubt of the people's thralldom. Of quieter temperament than the rest, a few of the people stood, wondering how these pictures were obtained. From the outer edge of the crowd one frenzied voice called,—

"You'll pay for this," he shouted, then disappeared in the darkness.

"All right," was Leigh's retort. "Just so you don't work your trade in the dark,—as you have been doing."

The cheering, to follow, was deafening. When it had subsided, a number of clean, determined-looking men insisted upon accompanying Leigh to his hotel.

"No! No!" he replied, quietly. "I am the safest

man in town. They know too well now, that public opinion will be trifled with no longer."

When Leigh arrived at his room, the telephone was calling. The conversation finished, he turned thoughtfully away. The hour was late. Within the hour he was to take the train to—he knew not where. The appeal, almost demand, had come, a moment before,—over the telephone,—from a woman he knew not of. The message conveyed secrets of the gang of conspirators. He was to meet the messenger in person.

Most important of all, a trace had been found of Gordon. This, the voice had told him with such trembling earnestness, that he had been moved to ask the reason,—why such deep interest, and who the informer might be? To this question, as though to hasten matters and assure his co-operation, the voice said: "One whom John Gordon would trust with his life; one who has been getting the plans of the conspirators, both for the cause of the campaign and for Mr. Gordon's sake."

With no further hesitation, he had agreed to go. She was to take the same train, somewhere enroute.

"Never bullet struck the breast of man upon the battlefield but that at the same time, found lodgment

in the heart of some woman." He was thinking audibly now, as was, at times, his habit. "No great reform was ever accomplished without her patriotic co-operation."

While waiting for the train he retired to his room to write. From the number of times he would refer to a letter he repeatedly drew from his pocket, one might imagine that the one he was preparing was of no little importance.

CHAPTER IX.

Early associations. The Valley of the Ohio.
Old friends and youth.

EARLY associations impress themselves upon the character of youth, bearing their fruitage with the march of time, not unlike grain sown in the field. In either case the resulting harvest depends, largely, upon the fertility of the soil. Even then the seed may be choked with tares, excluding, at once, the invigorating light and heat of the sun. To remove the rank growth of weeds may require considerable labor and even courage; yet there can be no adequate, healthful, life-sustaining harvest without it.

In the valley of the Ohio river, near the city of Louisville, and just below the falls, there are many highly improved farms, with shady woods of beech and maples, interspersed with great, giant oaks and a sprinkling of walnut, sycamore and hickory. Occasionally too, a sweet gum rises above its pre-empted sphere sending its roots deep into the sub-soil, like

a settler who had come to stay and with a mission important to the world.

As was well known in that neighborhood, and during that time, these monarchs of the woods would just as soon shed their fruitage into the laps of truant school boys as into the baskets of their owners. All circumstances bore out the theory that, regardless of the views of landed proprietors, first in time was first in right, and that this doctrine was firmly adhered to by trees. It is astonishing also how big and red and luscious are the apples that ripen in other people's orchards.

There was the maple, with its summer foliage of green, succeeded each fall by such wonderful blendings of colors. So beautiful were these they challenged the art of man to compete with this, the handiwork of God. For where is the inspiration to guide, or brush to paint, a faithful picture of the maple, or, with equal truth, the silent message of its charm? What earthly genius can paint the matchless coloring of these winter deadened leaves? More beautiful in death than in life, in silent yet eloquent language, they speak of the splendors to come; when that which is called life is no more. Truly, in the valley of the Ohio, during winter, the leaves of the maple give food for reflection.

A mile or two beyond the beautiful valley, in

gradual, graceful splendor, rose the "knobs," a range of hills, swinging back from the river. Here grew the chestnut and the persimmon. As if their fruits had been designed, by nature, to be the common heritage of all mankind, these great, fruitful ranges were as yet unfenced. Within their boundaries the right of all men to walk upon the face of the earth somewhere, was as yet respected as God-made law, not subject to amendment by the legislatures of men. This, however, was during the years far in advance of 1900, when the spinning of the thread of this narrative begins. Since that time, civilization has marched steadily forward, a progressive rise of elective despotism, while, piece by piece, individual freedom has been surrendered—a progressive fall of a people's power and independence. True, many years have elapsed since the Nation had abolished the right to execute a bill of sale for a human body and soul. Still, how true it is,—the right to live grows apace, more and more a problem. "The survival of the fittest" is still the essence of the law. Poverty, regardless, or in spite, of its causes, has become the greatest crime on earth.

John Gordon was the son of Judge John W. Gordon, formerly judge of a Kentucky circuit, but now a prosperous farmer. At the time of the beginning of this chapter, young Gordon was but fifteen years

of age. The elder Gordon, a staunch Democrat of the old school, was among the highly respected of his community, jealous of his integrity and generous in all things except his politics. Try as he might, that is if he tried at all, he could see nothing good in Republican doctrine, and nothing ill in the creed and practice of his own party. To this trait of his character might have been charged many heated discussions, more especially during election years. Not infrequently did these occur with Major Hubbard, owner of the adjoining estate. The Hubbard dwelling was separated from that of Judge Gordon by an apple orchard of two acres in extent on the Gordon estate, and an orchard of cherries, quinces, plums and peaches, of approximately the same acreage, on the land of Major Hubbard. Though of widely differing political beliefs and affiliations, these old-fashioned country gentlemen were fast friends. They possessed much in common. Save for an occasional slight estrangement, periodically occurring with each quadrennial election, little happened to disturb the quiet of their close, neighborly associations.

These occasional disagreements, however, did not, in the least, affect the close intimacy between their immediate families. At all times the doors of their homes were open to each other, as if such things as politics had never existed. As all understood, there

was no dividing line between the adjoining orchards. The fruitage of either was as much the rightful property of the Gordons as it was of the Hubbards. This spirit extended even to the domestics.

Below the falls, the Ohio is a deep, swift flowing stream, at normal stage slightly less than one mile in width. Upon its shaded banks the Gordons, and the Hubbards, would gather, and watch the eddying currents of the "great bend," or listen to the strains of "Dixie," or "The Star Spangled Banner," as, from the steam-throated calliopes of the great river packets, then plying the trade of the river cities and extensive bordering plantations, these musical waves were wafted to the opposite shores.

To these true Americans,—the Gordons and the Hubbards,—no other strains might so arouse the heart in patriotism for home and country; no other words so fill the soul with hope. Born in glory, they live in glory, and will die,—only when glory shall have ceased to live. No matter where the sons and daughters of America may wander; they may roam even unto the distant shores. Yet these sweet, inspiring strains, floating across the valleys and among the hills, will leap the seas to reach the American heart and bring it back to Gloryland, and to home again.

The old mill race, formed by embankments of rock

extending into the river a few hundred feet, paralleled the shore for almost a mile. The purpose of its construction was to develop power for the great mill that stood, rearing its five or six stories, at the foot of the rapids. Here the wheat grown upon the vast area of rich valley soil was prepared for human consumption. But, the spirit of youth draws little inspiration from the serious demands of industry. It was the general conception, firmly rooted in the minds of the young people of the neighborhood, that the principal, if not the sole, purpose of the building of the embankment was, that the inclosed waters might be protected from the strong wintry winds; so that when frozen the ice would be left smooth and almost transparent; sufficiently even and solid to serve for skating,—a delightful winter sport of the country-side.

Below the falls, a mile, upon a beautiful ridge overlooking the river, stood the home of the Gordons, distant a few hundred yards from that of the Hubbards. There was little imposing in either, except, perhaps the splendid groves of beech and oak, flanked by orchards and well-kept fields. In the distance, in the rear of the farms, rose in splendid grandeur long stretches of woods.

The Gordon home was of red brick, penciled white. Of two full stories above the basement, the wide halls

extended from front to rear of either floor. Fronting the upper hall was a wide veranda. A broad stone porch, approached by steps of the same material, led to the main entrance on the first floor. The basement reared its ceiling almost a full story above the level of the ground and was, in summer the coolest and in winter the warmest, portion of the house. A circular stairway, enclosed by a cherry rail surmounted banister, extended from the basement to the upper floor.

The Hubbard home was of but one story above the basement, roomy, a wide veranda extending clear around the front and sides. Always freshly painted, white, with shutters of green, it was at once home-like, restful and inviting. Woodbine and ivy almost covered the front and sides of the Gordon home. The cottage of the Hubbards peeped out from a profusion of climbing roses and honeysuckle. In the garden of each, great poppies, hollyhocks and the snow ball, towered above the coxcomb, marigold and violet. One might think these tall growing varieties, jealous of the dignity of their high position, had been appointed sentinels of the flowering world. Morning-glories, not to be outdone by their sturdier comrades, took up relays of the guard during the early morning hours. Along the boundary, between the

two estates, the mint and asparagus beds knew nothing of separate ownership.

Many were the discussions between the joint proprietors, held in this particular vicinity. Had the tender sprigs of mint been endowed with sense of hearing and speech, much could they have repeated of the merits of the product of one of the chief industries of Kentucky, and of how Kentucky colonels "took theirs." Occasionally there was some slight mention of politics or business.

John Gordon and Elizabeth, his sister, two years his junior, and Carrie Hubbard, of an age near Elizabeth's, were inseparable companions and playmates. Together they had jointly staked out the best "gum wax" trees in the valley, as well as the most palatable persimmon and sweetest sugar trees. Together, each year, they would gather the wild nuts,—hickory, walnut and chestnut,—religiously dividing the spoil in equal shares, to be stored for the long winter evenings. It is to be feared that, on many occasions, no very great regard was observed for boundaries, particularly where the harvest was most promising.

CHAPTER X.

A winter in "the valley." Women fight our battles as certainly as do men; with equal suffering,—equal patriotism, equal heroism. "In place of Adam, had that man been a Kentuckian!"

THE winter was one to be remembered throughout the country, and, especially, in the valley of the Ohio. So merciless had been the northern blasts that all traffic was practically suspended. The river, from which the valley takes its name, was frozen solid. Great transfer wagons were driven over the thick ice, from shore to shore. The nation-wide panic, too, had laid its blighting hand upon the hopes, as well as upon the industries, of men. Many, once used to plenty, were now reduced to the hard problem of actual existence.

It is in times like these that people think, wondering where each one stands and what is his responsibility. Often we depend too much upon ourselves, staking the future of those dependent upon us, upon the hazard of continued health and industry. One man trusts to the accumulation of the small savings

of his professional, or industrial, activities, trusting fate to carry him safely over the uncertain sea of life, with all, and in defiance of, its possibilities. Should health, or life, not forsake him, his slowly accumulated pennies may reach the proportions of a competency, and assure his loved ones against want. His savings may enable his children, through education, to meet, on something akin to equal terms, all competitors for bread and shelter. Such a man, though prompted by good impulses, gambles against his own.

Neither the Gordons nor the Hubbards, though in comfortable circumstances, were classed as rich. Besides their valley farms, each had separate investments in the city. Upon these, severe inroads had been made, following short crops and shorter prices. Yet most difficult situations have their compensations, or, at least, for the time, seem to have. In this respect, the two neighbors were no exceptions. Major Boyer, who lived in the city, though the owner of much land in the valley, was one of the few not

seriously affected by the stress of the times. With Colonel Hubbard, he had served the cause of patriotic duty during the trying years of '61 and '65, and the close friendship, formed under such trying circumstances, had stood the test of the intervening years and now gave proof of its sincerity. Ever a scene of activity and prosperity, Major Boyer's great tobacco warehouse had not as yet felt the weight of adversity.

Occasionally Colonel Hubbard visited the Boyers in the city. Always, when inspecting his farms, the Major would stop with the Hubbards. This naturally led up to an acquaintance with Judge Gordon, which in time grew into respectful, mutual esteem, though never into intimate friendship.

Among a close circle of friends, this was well understood. Major Boyer was a staunch Republican, and as emphatic in his denunciation of Democratic principles, as was the older Gordon, of Republican doctrine. Liberal in all other respects, in politics, they were "set" in their respective ways. Deferential and respectful at all times, yet there was a hidden barrier over which neither seemed disposed to step. There had been one clash, however, and that close,—very close,—to the bed of mint that grew on the border of the two estates.

Indiana, at the preceding election, had gone Re-

publican, which result had been but recently announced. It was loudly claimed by Democrats that the election would have resulted differently, had it not been for the purchased, and mobilized, negro vote. Naturally, the election, throughout the country, was uppermost in the public mind. Very naturally, too, the subject was broached during conversation between the three friends. In an unguarded moment,—

“Major,” said Judge Gordon, “while I have never approved of slavery, still, of the two, I believe the enfranchisement of the negro in his unprepared state of mind, will, as a crime against civilization, go down in history as the greater.”

“How do you reach that conclusion?” quickly asked the Major, the color beginning to rise.

“By a very simple line of reasoning,” retorted the Judge. “Your party seems to subscribe to the doctrine that government is a social compact between human bodies when in fact it cannot, if it is to be reliable and sane, be grounded upon any theory other than a compact between human minds.” Then, warming up to the subject: “Now, my principal objection to the negro voting is not on account of his color, nor yet because he has been a slave. It goes much deeper. Government ought to be a compact between those, only, who are responsible, not alone

to themselves but to all other parties to the agreement. Certainly, where intellectual force is lacking, there is neither safety, nor responsibility."

"But—"

"Pardon me, Major," respectfully interposed the Judge. "Before proceeding further I would like to repeat the language of a hero statesman of Texas,—a message, in my judgement the equal of any state paper in all history, not excepting, even, our Declaration of Independence. We, in our part of the country are, as a rule, not familiar with the political history of that State. We limit our studies and investigations to local environment, and national problems, such as may, most directly, appeal to our sympathies and interests. This is but natural. Every Kentuckian, for instance, is expected to be familiar with the life and habits of Daniel Boone; of his exploits against the Indians; his exploitations of the State of Kentucky. All Pennsylvanians are expected to be familiar with the history, and accomplishments, of William Penn, who founded that State. Texas has many heroes revered by her people, among them Mirabau Lamar, the second President of that Commonwealth when it was a Republic. Born in Georgia, he was a native of Texas, no more than Boone, a Virginian, was a native of Kentucky, or Penn, born in London, England, was a native of the state he

founded. Neither did Lamar discover Texas. He advanced something, however, even greater—an idea. That idea, stressed in classic verbiage, laid down a doctrine, which, in my judgment, is, in all history, second to one other, only; that one, the world message from the humble manger at Bethlehem. Allow me to repeat it.”

As though in the presence of a solemn truth, every fiber of his being tense with respect for his subject; his voice even, forceful, emphatic, yet respectful, Judge Gordon proceeded:—

“Education is the guardian genius of Democracy. It is the only foundation upon which a free people may stand;—intellect the only dictator a free people may recognize.”

And then, as was his habit when deeply in earnest, he lifted his hat as he added:

“Gentlemen, those words, and the message they convey, should be taught every boy, and girl, in every school in Christendom.”

There could be no doubt of the deep impression made upon his hearers. Yet the Major could not be brought to surrender a conviction that involved the wisdom, and good faith, of his party.

“You believe,” he challenged, “that none but highly educated men should be allowed to vote.”

“I didn’t state it in just that way,” replied the

Judge, "what I am trying to convey is, that none but intelligent people should participate in government,—those who understand what they are doing. Lots of people are intelligent, yet without book education. Government is a business as well as a science, and certainly, in private life we would not entrust either, to anyone, unless equipped with some understanding, at least. You would not place your private business under the direction of those who know absolutely nothing of it. Nor would your banker. After all, individual hope and contentment depends upon government, wisely administered. Why, then, should not that government be grounded in the same, secure, method that we apply to private enterprise."

"Then your theory of government is that only intelligent people should share,—that intelligent people, only, should vote."

"Certainly! Government is a compact between human brains, not bodies!"

"Then, demanded the Major, "why don't you carry your theory a little further? Why don't you favor women voting?" This in a voice suggesting he had the Judge cornered.

"Why not?" quickly asked Judge Gordon. Then:

"I mean intelligent women."

"Well!" exclaimed the Major impatiently. "You

are putting forward a rather advanced thought, are you not? The idea! Women voting!"

"No!" emphatically denied the Judge. His tall form straightened to its full height.

"Not by any means am I putting forward any advanced thought. To the contrary, thought has been laggard and is just beginning to advance and close up the hiatus in the ranks of common justice. Our government is anchored in the soil of the consent of the governed,—that is, that all subject to the law, having a reasonable understanding of their own acts, shall have a voice in determining what that law shall be. Woman is subject to our laws, both civil and criminal; yet she has no voice in framing them. Her property is subject to taxation; still she has no voice in determining, either the need, or amount, of the tax. Neither is she given any direction, or control, over the expenditures of the sums collected from taxes levied upon her property. Just because she is a woman, the law, for a given crime, makes no exception, and the penalty is the same."

"Now, Major," and the Judge's brow became slightly clouded, "tell me. Where does the consent of the governed come in?"

"Oh, well!" said the Major, as though to end the discussion. "Women can't go to war, and anyone who can't fight for our country should not be per-

mitted to vote. Besides," he added, jestingly, "if they had the ballot, they might use it to force us,—we poor men,—into battle and get us killed off."

"Pardon me, Major, but I believe you are wrong, there." Judge Gordon's voice had grown strangely mild and low. "Except as a last resort in preservation of national honor, the great masses of women have always been, and will always be, opposed to war. Listen, Major! You were a soldier, and, I happen to know, a brave one. You have seen men shot down upon the battlefield, some of them mere boys."

Gently reaching a hand up to the Major's shoulder, the Judge looked him kindly in the eyes:

"My friend!" he proceeded, his voice touched with loneliness, "I know you will pardon me for referring to my own affairs. But, as you, doubtless, have been informed, our oldest boy,—he was then just twenty-one years of age,—refined, with his heart's blood, at Shiloh, the cause of the Southland. He has ceased to suffer. His mother's heart is still bleeding. Long before their season, while she was still a young woman, I saw the snow flakes, one by one, form their crown of immaculate white above her brow,—and just after Shiloh."

To overcome a slight trembling of his voice, required but a moment. Then the Judge continued,—

"No, sir! Women fight our battles just as certainly as men; with equal suffering, with equal patriotism,—with equal heroism. She may be a mother, she may be a sister or a daughter; she may be a wife, or some one in whose heart the petal of the love rose may have found a sweet, and may be, a secret lodgment,—but she fights her battles,—just-the-same-as-man."

Silently they strode toward the veranda of the Hubbard home.

"Judge," said Colonel Hubbard, who, throughout the discussion, had been quietly attentive, "there is a great deal of truth in your philosophy; but politics are rotten and lead to many things. Surely you would not have our women act like men?"

"God forbid!" and the reply burst forth with vehemence. "Nor would that be the sequence of her enfranchisement. Men would soon learn to respect her power, and become less reckless of her rights." Then in slow measured words, Judge Gordon continued:

"Gentlemen! This world of ours has always been a man-governed world. In the character of our sex, it has bred a spirit of selfishness, even cowardice. History, written by man, is replete with the deeds of men. Many of these deeds were noble, it is true. It is equally true that many others were ignoble. Monu-

ments have been reared to men whose ambition, sometimes right, at other times wrong, caused rivers of human blood to flow, and filled the world with human wrecks. The bloodier the deeds, the greater the hero,—and the higher the monument. Yet, there was one woman, whose heroism, measured by things that are best, far exceeded them all. While men gloried in spilling blood, she sought to staunch the flow. Her work was to heal the wounds caused by man's iron, merciless heel. If, as a tribute to her labor of love, each righteous man and woman should offer but one single rose, one could not walk over the once bloody field of the Soudan, without trampling under foot the carpeting of flowers."

"Yes, Judge." The Major was thinking deeply. "No doubt men have been selfish historians. But," and his voice had a touch of resentfulness, "you spoke, also, of cowardice?"

"Cowardice!" The Judge now became tense with emotion. "Why, let's just go back to the very beginning,—to the Garden of Eden, and witness Adam. Our common progenitor! The superb, noble, superior man; image of his Maker and depository of temporal power! He to whom all things were to be entrusted; whose wisdom was to guide and whose courage would protect! Let us but imagine him, Major! As the angel of the Lord appeared, what did he do?"

His brow became deeply furrowed, and the words came slowly:

"In the splendid magnificence of his protecting manhood, Adam did not for one moment, hesitate to declare, 'Lord, Eve did it and tempted me!'" Then, his indignation fully aroused,—

"Major! In place of Adam, had that man been a Kentuckian, he would have placed himself between the wrath of God and the woman and said, 'Lord, I did it! Eve is innocent!'"

The remainder of the distance was crossed, each intent upon his own reflections. Somehow their arms had become closely linked together. As their feet were raised to the steps of the veranda, the Major, who had been thinking deeply, paused. With face wreathed in smiles he whispered:

"Judge, if, as you have suggested, Adam had been a Kentuckian,—where would the need of the serpent have come in?"

"There would have been none," was the quick reply.

Every one has his own philosophy of life, tho' but few grant this privilege to women. With either, if in defiance of the philosophy of love, their philosophy is wrong. For, except His handiwork be desecrated, God's laws are immutable. Nor is the human heart

of our own making; its impulses are to be obeyed, —not compelled to obey. It is the master,—not the subject, of human affinity. Between the sexes,—the ambassador of a deeper force,—a hidden power;—a fine superstructure upon a foundation fixed by eternal law. Though we gloss it over in poetry and song,—ignore, as best we can, its occult, invisible power; still,—the philosophy of the human heart,—it is firmly, immovably, there.

To every living thing, animal or vegetable, God spake the command: "Increase and multiply thy species." Yet, in this man world of ours, how unequal its interpretation,—how unrighteous the application,—of this divine law. A man may sin a hundred times; may violate the law of God, of man, of wedded troth. Man demands,—and is forgiven;—all is varnished over. But let a woman err but once, the hidden power the same,—yielding only to her heart she may even do no wrong; unwritten law will banish her,—brand her as a worthless thing,—while guilt, trouser-clothed, stalks free, unpunished, unashamed.

It — is — neither — right — nor — just; God's law abides for all alike.

CHAPTER XI.

Ethics of school days and a girl's loyalty.
How wonderful is the human heart with its
hidden mysteries!

IN many ways, and in many places, the cruel winter had left its impress upon the Valley. Carrie Hubbard had contracted a severe cold. Tenacious, persevering, it refused to yield to the care of either the family physician or of loving friends.

John Gordon, now eighteen years of age, was preparing to enter college in the city. For the first time in their young lives, these three friends, John Gordon, his sister Elizabeth, and Carrie Hubbard, were not to attend school together. The prospect of separation, now drawing near, was distressing.

Easily mastering the problems of school, young Gordon had, during his moments of leisure, plunged, deeply, into the study of social and political economy. Even now he had a fair grasp of the problems of government. Judge Gordon, though inclined toward advanced political thought, sought to discourage a like tendency upon the part of his son. One day, the younger Gordon had dared to compare the true

philosophy of Jefferson with the practices of the party then in control of political affairs in Kentucky. The father, for the first time, threatened to thrash him. Thereafter, Carrie Hubbard, between whom and young Gordon the young years had cemented a close bond of friendship, became his only confidant. To the boy, the loss of her companionship promised to be both heavy and personal. Little did either of them dream how permanent the separation was to be,—that the great white plague, recruiting for the Heavenly Choir, had placed its mark upon this sweet flower of the Valley, bidding it prepare for the Celestial call.

Major Boyer, since the end of the war, had devoted himself, entirely, to business. About his office there was at all times an air of busy industry. Come from that exclusive circle, often spoken of as "blue-grass aristocracy," Major and his gentle wife, were, happily, blessed with wealth and learning. Two children had been born to them; Georgiana, a girl of bright, cheerful disposition, loved by everyone in the community, and Dan, a boy of high character and splendid morals, though sadly spoiled by overindulgent parents. Often reprimanded by his father, his faults were as frequently condoned by his mother, and, even, defended by his faithful sister. Not that

his imperfections were not known,—they were too pronounced to pass unnoticed. Georgiana's loyal, sisterly devotion rose above them. Always prone to excuse him, she was, at all times, ready to defend him. This trait of her character was emphasized one day, and in a way that affected the happiness of her entire life.

Jack Gordon, as the younger Gordon had come to be called, and Dan Boyer were college mates. Of widely different temperaments, there had been, between them, but little in common. Dan, a scion of Valley aristocracy, conferred his smiles upon the sons of the rich. Jack Gordon, democratic to the core, recognized no distinctions. Aware of Dan's assumption of social superiority, Jack quietly ignored him. Doubtless this relation would have continued indefinitely, but for an incident, common to school life, usually of slight significance.

It came up on the play ground. One of the brightest boys in the school, of frail body and, according to Dan's social view, of common parentage, had passed the examinations with highest honors. Jack had passed, also, and the two were expecting to be graduated at the end of the term. Dan, the older of the three, and a classmate, had failed. Stung with humiliation, he charged favoritism. This Jack resented, whereupon a quarrel ensued.

The following morning the students, as usual, gathered upon the campus. As Dan was seen approaching there was, noticeable, a fever of suppressed expectation. If there had been any illusions, they were quickly dispelled. As Dan came close to young Gordon he drew off his coat and, with his hat, threw it upon the ground.

"Now Mr. Jack Gordon," he challenged with confidence, "what about it?"

Jack, aware of Dan's coming, and not unmindful of his purpose, had determined to avoid a difficulty, if he could do so honorably, at least upon, or near, the campus. Advancing toward his challenger, with a manner free of fear yet untouched with belligerency, Jack said,—

"Dan, you were in the wrong, yesterday. Certainly you know it. Naturally you are a gentleman. Don't you think you had better apologize and let it go at that?"

"Apologize, nothing!" was the quick retort. "Besides I don't keep such things in stock. So you might as well shed your linen." Then, compromisingly, "Unless you care to apologize on your own account."

"I may keep them in stock, as you put it, but not for occasions like this," was the reply, slow, deliberate and full of meaning. Jack's coat and hat went to the ground.

No time was wasted in further parley. Dan was the taller and heavier; Jack had the longer reach. A quick, deft, smash to Dan's nose and upper lip staggered him. But for a moment only. The rich red fluid spread to his chin, thence to, what had, at the beginning, been an immaculate shirt front.

Like a wounded tiger Dan plunged in, landing his fist so heavily that it drove his more lightly built opponent backward, a few steps, and almost to the ground. Following up his advantage, Dan rushed in only to find that fist, at the end of the longer reach, hard against his, already, bleeding nose, sending splashes of red over both fighters.

It was at this moment the unexpected happened.

"You let him alone!" cried an imperious, excited voice.

The same instant, a young girl, her eyes flashing her indignation and resentment, threw herself between the combatants. Swift blows from a riding whip rained down, in quick succession, upon Jack's uncovered head and shoulders.

"You let my brother alone!" the excited girl demanded, between strokes.

It was all over. Neither of the fighters was the less surprised; neither of them showed the least inclination to proceed.

There she stood. Flushed with emotion, even un-

der such unusual circumstances, a certain dignity asserting itself. Her beautiful, dark brown eyes flashed her determination, backed by a courage not, for a moment to be questioned. The velvet ribbon, loosened by the violence of her exertions, had fallen to the ground. The rich dark hair, fallen in luxuriant folds, framed a face of strikingly, intelligent beauty. The slight, well formed figure bent slightly forward, the arm raised prepared to strike once more.

One instant of harrowing tenseness;—then Jack Gordon felt the inspiration. In the flash of the moment,—he knew. That something heretofore unknown to him,—something strangely different,—had burst into his life.

He had known of this girl as the sister of Dan Boyer,—there had been no personal acquaintance. Had known of her as a beautiful girl,—the daughter of Major Boyer. Like all young men he had admired her beauty—but only in a way and at a distance. Certainly his thoughts had pictured neither her, nor any other girl, in the role of heroine. The circumstance, even in its startling revelations, appealed to his young imagination. It opened to his soul a new conception of the influences, and affinities, of life as, day by day, in strange and wonderful ways, its unfolding power molds and directs our several destinies.

Folding his arms, Jack stood still, receding not one single step. The lash fell heavily. An ugly streak, crimson proof of the girl's first desperate assault, grew more and more distinct upon his forehead.

"Very well, Miss Boyer," said Jack, quietly. He had instantly recognized his assailant. "Of course I wouldn't fight a girl."

It was not so much what he said, as the simple, quiet way in which he said it. The young girl, a moment ago her face white with indignant anger, was now transfixed with wonder. The whip, poised to strike once more, slipped from the girl's fingers, then fell to the ground.

"Oh! What have I done!" the girl cried, a flush of shame surmounting her face where the pallor had been. Appealingly she turned to her brother.

But there was no sympathy there. Dan's latent manhood had been aroused by this unwarranted violation of the ethics of youthful fistic combat and he was glaring at the girl, resentfully.

"Yes!" he demanded angrily. "What have you done?" Then, seeing her distress, in a voice touched with kindness,—

"Georgiana, what in the world? You don't know anything about these affairs. It's all my fault, anyhow."

Jack had gathered up his coat and hat. No sooner

did he hear Dan's frank, manly admission, no less surprising to him than to the others of the crowd, standing about, than he stepped forward, his hand extended,—

"Dan, let's call it square," he said, generously.

"Gladly," replied Dan, "We have no reason for quarrel, have we?"

It was the turning point in Dan's character. His instincts were naturally good and it had only required something to touch his honor to awaken them.

"And you will pardon me, Miss Boyer?" This from Jack, who, with a certain dignified respect, had turned to the young girl.

"Oh, I am so ashamed," was the trembling reply. "I—I—"

"It's all right,—it's all right," he interrupted. There's certainly nothing to be ashamed of. I think it was just grand."

"Mr. Gordon!" Here interrupted Dan, the natural instinct of the gentleman asserting itself, "Let me introduce my sister, Georgiana. I don't think you have ever met, have you?"

Jack bowed low.

"Not until a moment ago," he replied laughingly. In this spirit all present joined, heartily.

Thus met John Gordon and Georgiana Boyer. When all had left the field, Jack quietly picked up

the whip and velvet ribbon, forgotten in the excitement, and secreted them in his pocket. That evening, he laid them carefully away. In the solitude of after years these trophies of so interesting an episode were often consulted.

How wonderful the human heart with its hidden mysteries. Filled to overflowing, it may yet receive,—losing nothing,—having room for more. Nor asks it anyone's permission. Neither created by man, nor subject to man's control, its impulse is the law. Were it truly worn upon our sleeve, with every grief its sear, and with every love its fragrant, silent proof, what stories out of school would grieve, or gladden, the lives of men,—and women.

Nor was the incident to be easily forgotten by Georgiana Boyer. The part she had played, while no more than might have been expected of a girl of her loyal temperament, yet had its embarrassments. True, she had been uninformed as to the cause of the quarrel. There had been no opportunity of knowing who was most to blame, even if the knowledge might have altered things. Then, too, there was Dan's bleeding face. What girl, of any sort of sisterly devotion, could have hesitated, even for a moment?

Jack Gordon had acted so differently from other young boys. So differently from what anyone,

especially a girl, might have expected. There, too, was the red, bleeding cut across the forehead. The place where, with all the force an angry girl could command, the handle of her riding whip had fallen, heavily,—cruelly.

“Oh, why couldn’t he have acted differently?” Georgiana asked herself one day. She became angry, almost, because of Jack Gordon’s failure to observe the amenities of the occasion,—that is, such as may not have proven so embarrassing,—afterward.

Closing the book she had intended reading, she stepped to a window, from which the view of the Ohio, and the opposite shore, was unbroken. For a long while she stood, looking, across the rushing waters, into the beautiful valley beyond, where, in the fields, corn was waving green. High up, on an elevated spot, the homes of the Gordons and the Hubbards, freshly dressed in new paint, glistened in the evening sun.

“And he asked me to pardon him!” communing with thoughts that consumed her. “Asked me—who had struck him,—insulted him!” self-accusingly.

“I wonder will it leave an ugly mark?” she asked herself.

After a long while Georgiana closed the window. Slowly, the girl, heavy-hearted, wandered through the long hall, out into the garden.

As with the compass, the needles of our souls are drawn,—unconsciously it may be, yet drawn,—to the north star of human destiny. Often too, with such positive force that laws of kings, or political states, prove impotent. Reigning dynasties may, from their thrones, decree the union of their offspring; it is but the unravelling of the skein of political succession, anchored upon the restless sea of ambition. The daughter of millions may be placed upon the auction block, tagged with the price of social station,—and sold; it is but the philosophy of life grounded deep in the sands of vanity, by the unholy terms of sale, and purchase, a double crime. In either case it stands for existence only. In defiance of the philosophy of love, each is opposed to that exquisite life ordained and bequeathed by the Giver of life.

CHAPTER XII.

A skating party on the lake. The rescue.
"Georgiana! For God's sake don't die,—
not now!"

THE fall had set in, bleak and threatening. Another winter, of unusual severity, was approaching. The quadrennial general election was soon to be held,—the political temperature steadily rising. Judge Gordon gave little thought to the weather. Since the panic, conditions had improved but slowly. Reverses proved to be even more serious than at the time believed. The struggle was beginning to wear. Besides, were not the difficult times due to Republican misrule and would not all be remedied in case of a Democratic victory in the coming November? Weather was by no means the only important subject to be considered.

Jack was now twenty, and would be graduated the following June. At twenty-one he expected to be deep in the study of law and political economy. He still held to his ambition to solve the problems of unequal government and solve them rightly.

There had been a great Democratic barbecue and rally, out on the slope of the "knobs." All "the unterrified" from the three cities, clustering around the falls, had attended. Vorhees had spoken in the morning and one of Kentucky's gifted orators had preached the creed of Democracy in the afternoon. Both speeches were eloquent, forceful and, to the majority of the audience, convincing. Judge Gordon, of course, was there, as also, Jack. The elder Gordon reasoned that the occasion would be one of enlightenment. In this he was not deceived, for the true doctrine of Thomas Jefferson had been expounded in no uncertain terms.

"Well, my boy," asked Judge Gordon, as, in the evening, he and the younger Gordon were returning home, "What did you think of them?" leaving the other to deduct whether his question was meant for the speeches, or the speakers.

"Fine, Father," replied Jack, who had been deeply interested throughout the day. "Both speakers were eloquent."

Jack Gordon had, for his years, a fair knowledge of Jefferson. Lately he had been taking an inventory of Kentucky politics and had been trying to harmonize it with his understanding of the Jeffersonian philosophy, "That the minority had equal rights,

which equal law must protect and to deny which would be oppression." Try as he would, he could not fit his theory of this favored doctrine with the governmental policy of his native Democratic State. He knew the depth of his father's party loyalty. Grounded in honest belief, it would not blend with his own theory of government. The dollar had not, as yet, come so completely into his kingdom. Of middle life, the elder Gordon had been too busy with the demands of his profession, and later activities, to closely follow the trend of the times, or become wise to the schemes of men.

For a strict party man to take issue with the leaders upon questions of party policy, was, according to the Judge's view, almost treason. Did not they, repeatedly, lay down the doctrine of "equal rights to all and special privileges to none?" What more could anyone ask of them?

The younger Gordon, while quietly respecting his father's opinions, refused to approve them. "To what extent can this theory of equal rights apply except it go, hand in hand, with equal opportunity?" he would ask himself.

The night had been cold. Low gray clouds, messengers of the coming wintry invasion, drifted be-

fore the pressure of the north winds. The trees, shivering in the blasts, shed their foliage as, making ready for a new spring and a new generation, they entered upon their long, wintry sleep. The deadened leaves, piled in increasing profuseness, seemed to wonder at life's uncertain tenure. Together they assembled, prepared to cross the twilight zone leading into the unknown sphere beyond. Dust, animate, or inanimate, ever returns to dust.

The mill-race, smooth frozen, sparkled beneath a thin veil of drifting snow. Youthful skaters, shoes fitted to runners of slender steel, sped, gladsomely, and, in long riotous strokes, across its length and breadth, filling the air with the carnival of their youthful fun. Below the falls, looking from its frosted windows, stood the old mill. Hanging from the eaves, cones of ice fringed the edges of the high-pitched roof. As if pleading for release from the icy fetters that held it captive, the great water wheel groaned a dismal cry with each blast of the north wind. Upon the bank of the lake, the great log fire roared with crackling, scornful glee, at the helplessness of this great frozen giant, begging for one single breath of warm, fetter-breaking air.

At the extreme northern end of the lake, where the swift flowing river would drive the muddy current

through the interstices of the rock embankment, the water had refused to congeal. Except for a slight thin covering, now and then, only to be broken away with each successive rise and fall of the changing current, this part of the lake was not frozen. To every one in the Valley this was known, and to its dangers all, save the unwary, gave proper heed.

It was the week-end gathering of the youth of the Valley,—a skating party on the lake. Mercurial exploration of thermometers mattered little, so long as the ice was smoth and firm. Nothing else was, or could be, quite so important at this particular time. So it seemed to a group, ranging in age from sixteen to twenty-one, for the most part members of the graduating class of the College. Thoughts of school, however, were for the moment forgotten. The coveted diploma, or that which might be sought beyond it, would keep until the morrow.

Each, no doubt, had ambition. Some would enter the great University. Others would face the great world school,—where Greek meets Greek, and characters of men, and women, are tested and developed. All were proud of their, then, Alma Mater. Some would know no other. Others would pay tribute to a new shrine. None would forget youth. In the

years to come its memories of silk would be woven with the coarser, harsher, threads of practical life.

How it happened, no one could tell.

The first note of warning came with an appealing, helpless, cry. One of the skaters had swept through the treacherous, thin covering of ice at the north end of the lake. One breathless, awful moment and the wild shouts of fun gave way to shrieks of agony as the skaters, according to their different temperaments, hastened to aid, or, with hands clasped and cheeks blanched, trembled in the presence of the harrowing truth.

John Gordon had just completed the circuit of the frozen lake. Even before the others, he knew, and his speed unchecked, made straight for the opening where the lashing waters told of the struggling victim.

At times, it is said, an eternity depends upon the decision of a moment. Now there was not a moment to spare. Nor was one lost. It could not have been called an act of courage. In the short moment the chances did not, and could not, present themselves. A boy only knew that a girl was drowning. In an instant, Jack Gordon was in the icy flood. Another instant and he had grasped the almost unconscious, yet still struggling, form of Georgiana Boyer.

Into each life is born a soul,—its force, at times, resistless. We may bind it, and enjoy the pleasing sweetness of its thralldom; may even be unconscious of its being. But a moment comes,—the fetters broken,—when fate unfolds the mysteries of life and holds us captive to the end of time.

“Georgiana!” Something in the tremendous earnestness of his appeal quieted her.

“Georgiana! Georgiana! For God’s sake don’t die! Don’t leave me,—not now!”

But the cry of a soul,—lifted, for a moment only, was hushed in the freezing waters, as, with the whole strength of his young frame, Jack Gordon bent beneath the surface and lifted the precious burden, clinging confidently now, above the thirsting flood.

It was the first time he had eved addressed her as Georgiana.

With a few strong strokes, he reached the shallow depths, where a dozen anxious hands lifted them to safety. The air was freezing cold. Their clothing, now a mass of ice, glistened in the descending sun. Quickly overcoats and wraps were brought. Georgiana, deeply imbedded in their protecting folds, was borne in strong, and willing, arms, to the nearest house. Here valley hospitality, excelled nowhere on earth, received and cared for the grateful girl, in-

voluntary actor in what had promised, for a time, to be a deplorable tragedy.

This, however, was not to be the end. Jack, refusing all proffers of overcoats and wraps, had strode away as he was,—a walking mass of clinging icicles. Georgiana, subjected to the greater shock, though most tenderly protected, was yet to pay the penalty,—a severe case of pneumonia followed shortly after her arrival home.

CHAPTER XIII.

Reflections during convalescence. Anyone may inherit wealth and position! Character, alone, may master them!

GEORGIANA was convalescent. Happily, a buoyant spirit and vigorous constitution had determined the issue favorably. A child of wealth, she drew no line measured by worldly possession. The trying years of the panic gave ample proof of her generous thoughtfulness of those less fortunate. Many were the eager inquiries, sublime indeed were the earnest prayers, treasured were the silent tokens,—bunches of simple flowers bought with accumulated pennies. In no uncertain language, these spoke of gratitude. Then, too, there were frequent clusters from the Hubbards and Gordons. Over these Georgiana would finger,—long.

The days of her convalescence were not unhappy. During her fevered moments there had come to her mind certain vague recollections, succeeded by an ever persistent doubt.

“Georgiana! For God’s sake don’t die.”

Often, in the long hours of the night, she would

hear the appealing, troubled, voice; even in her wakeful moments it would come, and,—always the same.

“I wish I knew if I were dreaming,—then,” she would say to herself. Then, after a long deep study:

“And to think how I insulted him,—yes, struck him and left that horrible scar,—that other time.”

Until now she had never quite forgiven him. She could not tell why, unless, that he had not resented her unpardonable assault upon him. What a strange element of our composition that, often, urges us to dislike the more, the one we have injured most. What a wonderful study, too, is the human heart with its hidden mysteries. Unfolding with the advancing years,—master of all save fate.

“Did he really call me?” Georgiana would ask herself, “there in the water? Could it,—” and she would try and put the thought away, “could it have been but the echo of some wild imagination during my momentary unconsciousness?” Her troubled mind would become more and more distressed,—as the doubt grew. Still,—and, with the thought, her face would wreath in a look of strange contentment,—still, she remembered, quite clearly, the very moment he had grasped her, she had known—known, even in the midst of her despair she had known,—

it was Jack Gordon. How, then, could there be, longer, any doubt?

“Georgiana! For God’s sake don’t die! Don’t leave me—not now!”

He had really called her,—in just that way,—as soul only can call to soul? No longer could there be doubt. The call had been heard,—and answered. Somehow she knew,—that he knew. The thought filled her heart as nothing had ever filled it.

When, after Jack Gordon had rescued her from the lake, she had recovered from her swoon and tried to thank him, he had replied, carelessly,—

“Oh, that’s all right, little girl—er, I beg your pardon, Miss Boyer. You are not a bit more grateful than I am.”

As the tears began to fill her eyes,—

“Now, you mustn’t cry!” said Jack, his voice unsteady. “You have just proven yourself the bravest little girl in all the valley and tears,—your tears,—would hurt. And too, I—I—we are all so proud of you—”

“Yes, but had it not been for you—”

“For me?” Jack interrupted, assuming surprise. “Why I just happened to be the first to get there. Besides, I was headed directly for you and couldn’t stop.”

It had been on her mind to say that she would

rather he had put it differently. In the haste to reach shelter and warmth, however, there had been no opportunity. Still she knew,—knew he was but acting a part,—and that it called for even more courage than did the rescue from the lake. His words had seemed careless to others,—but not to Georgiana.

In a strange, subconscious way, she had known, there in the water, that her arms were clasped tight around his throat, and that he had refused to release them, even to save his strength.

“Georgiana! Don’t leave me now!” Somehow all doubt had, now, vanished. In its place her soul was singing with a new hope—too sweet for utterance.

For a few moments she had forgotten and lived as God, in his infinite wisdom, had ordained. For a short while she had listened to the whisperings of her own happy heart,—the heart He had created for her. Then came the flash of truth.

Often does it happen, that the line between that, which we wish to do, and the things we are destined to do, is difficult to trace,—and obey. Upon the one side may be arrayed the whole impulse of our nature; upon the other, the restraints of ethical law, or of a sense of duty. Justice, in either case, may be, and, indeed often is, forgotten. Yet the natural issue of

the mind is truth according to its conception of what truth may be. Still, unless restrained by considerations too weighty to deny, we are apt to follow impulses leading to either the goal of our own choosing, or to the one fixed for us by the hidden, resistless power of our natures. It is, then, not to be wondered, that the problem often confronts our minds,—“Are we at all times strong enough to live the truth, as it has been taught us, when such truth is opposed to the forces born within us?”

In the exquisite happiness that had come to her, Georgiana had forgotten that, from childhood, she had been promised in marriage. Not that she had been consulted. It had been the dream of her parents, and she had acquiesced. There had been no declarations of love,—no caresses. It had been understood, and she had been trained to believe, that her future had been definitely and finally arranged. She was to marry into one of the best families of Kentucky; to wed a young man of high attainments and brilliant professional success.

Of late days she had been drawing mental comparisons, and,—she had forgotten her engagement. In a declamation at school, Jack Gordon had announced the doctrine that “Anyone may inherit wealth and position, but character alone, may master them for

itself." Such thoughts were causing her to reflect, and reflection brought new problems.

"What is it women love most in men?" she asked herself. "Is it wealth or station?" A great deal depends. "Is it handsome figure or appearance?" No, not of itself. These, alone, give no promise of the higher qualities which command respect and esteem. "Is it intellect?" A great deal depends, again. Much like wealth, intellect may be employed, either for good or evil. "Is it character?" If of high standard, it will command all other desirable elements. Of what value, after all, have the rest without character?

Georgiana had decided. That character, even though penniless, is of infinitely greater worth than wealth and station without it.

"There is something more in life than property," she would reason. "Nothing in either life, or property, without that which makes both worth while; that which, after all, women love most,—character. In the quiet of her long convalescence she had fought it out. Upon the one hand the conventions of society; upon the other the mandate of a human heart—a woman's heart, and natural law had won.

Marriage, true marriage, is but the blending of human souls,—consecrated by love, its genesis. "Where thou goest, beloved, there shall I go; where

thou lodgest, there shall I lodge, also; thy people shall be my people and thy God shall be my God." Somehow she knew, and the thought quieted her. Knew that Jack Gordon, too, would yield only to the law,—the law that attracts, and binds, the heart of man to the heart of woman.

Slowly Georgiana walked to the piano. There by the window, looking beyond the river into the valley,—the valley where lived Jack Gordon. Dreamily, her fingers wandered over the keys. Tenderly rose the strains, soft and sweet,—painfully sweet as they echoed her loneliness. All of life's ambition;—all of life's hopes;—its sadness,—its cares,—its loves,—its pain, its everything that counts, seemed blended together. As if sprung from the depths of her soul the music filled the world,—her world. To the low, soft notes, her heart was singing its grief,—its love,—its fate, and, even so, its happiness. In the silence of the night, she whispered softly, sadly, yet with refreshing sweetness, the call of soul to soul: "Georgiana! Don't die! Don't leave me."

CHAPTER XIV.

Out in the West yet still of the Valley. The stroll along the river bank. "Is it true, Georgiana, is it true?"

SINCE the incidents of earlier life, as reviewed in the preceding chapters, the years had unraveled their skeins and, with their experiences, had passed into history. Yet, to a great extent, we lean upon the memories of the past, drawing from them, certain lessons that guide our present and prepare our future. Did the past hold nothing worth remembering, then we shall have lived in vain. Did the future promise nothing worthy of record, then life's perspective holds nothing to inspire us toward achievement. In youth there are two great character builders,—the home and the school. If we would know the future of our State; if we would know the future of our race, that future must be read in the environment of early life and across the threshold of the schools. If we look for the things worth while, we shall not see them through the vista of an institution that corrupts character.

It had now been six years since John Gordon had

cast his lot in the West. Aside from the eternal march of human tide, from the cradle to the grave, time had wrought but few changes in the "Valley," to which, each year, it was John Gordon's rule to return. Upon each of these occasions he would strew flowers upon the graves of his loved ones. In the old churchyard there were now three mounds. Here, the lifeless clay would speak to him of mother, father and the companion of his early youth. As in life, so was it in death. The Gordons and the Hubbards, inseparable, lay side by side, in the City of Eternal Sleep. To John Gordon there was a vague sort of comfort in the thought that they were not alone,—that Heaven is not made of youth alone; that those that gave birth mingle with the youth that owe them life. Truly, the wonderful setting of silvered crowns, decked with the unfolding buds of spring, must be sublime.

Upon each return he would find the mounds,—his mounds, freshly dressed in myrtle and new cut flowers. That they were so scrupulously cared for appealed to him, and a feeling, almost of tenderness, for the old keeper would possess him. He had not remarked that, when he would express his deep-felt gratitude for such careful attention, the aged sexton would flush with embarrassment. To Gordon's mind it had not occurred, that cut roses might not be pro-

vided save at a cost far above the accounts rendered by the confused recipient of his words of appreciation.

Now of the West, John Gordon's heart was still in the "Valley." Not alone for the dead. There were still the memories of the old mill pond,—the few moments in the icy waters,—the close clinging of the trembling arms,—the call of a soul, as it burst its chains,—and the answer. He had been faithful to the memories of an earlier,—a childhood,—attachment. A brotherly one, upon his part, it is true, yet dear. To brighten the numbering days, he had done all that could be done. Throughout the years, since Carrie died, he and Georgiana had been close friends. Since the rescue from the lake nothing had been spoken more,—save upon one occasion.

The evening before he had departed for the West, they had strolled along the bank of the river. Each knew of that which was uppermost in the mind of the other. For a long while they strode, in silence, or speaking of things remote from the subject neither dared touch upon. Now they had come within view of the old mill pond and, fearing to trust themselves further, had paused.

With unsteady voice, Gordon had been telling her of his hopes,—out in the great West, and she, fearing to betray her emotion, dared not look up into his

troubled face. It was when he had begun to say goodbye that, for a moment off her guard, she had glanced up and he had seen the moistened eyes.

"Is it true, Georgiana, is it true?" he cried.

Upon the instant he was holding her close, kissing the tears away as she, unresisting, stole her arms around his neck.

"Yes, Jack! It is only too precious true, dear!" her voice trembling. "But we both know—"

Slowly they retraced their footsteps, each cheered by the mutual confession of that which they had already known to be true, yet saddened with thoughts of the barrier, interposed, between them.

Of her loyalty to her parents he could not doubt. Yet he knew that she was strong enough, brave enough, and, at the proper time, would oppose her individual right to plans made in her childhood. Something in the entwining arms,—something in the appealing eyes,—told him to hope and wait.

Often in his western home, his heart heavy in its loneliness, he would recall to his mind how close, and with what confidence, she had clung to him,—there and in the icy water,—when a new vision had unfolded to him its mysteries. At these times he would seek the one token he had of her,—but a simple piece of velvet ribbon,—that which had fallen from her hair that day when she had so bravely defended

her brother,—the day he first knew her. As he would press it to his lips, all that lay beyond the window seemed hushed in the empire that lay in the hollow of his hand.

Nor had Georgiana forgotten. Since girlhood she had been promised in marriage. As often it happens in the Valley, two prominent and intimately associated families had planned, through the marriage of their children, to unite their fortunes. Prompted by a desire, not entirely unmixed with the vanity of wealth and station, Georgiana's parents had so persistently encouraged a betrothal, that the girl reluctantly consented, but with the reservation that she should be permitted to fix the day of the marriage ceremony. This she had never done. Between the girl and her betrothed, there had never been more than mutual esteem. Until her rescue from the freezing waters of the lake, her heart had been untouched by any sentiment deeper than friendship. Now she had resolved upon a course strictly in sympathy with her individual right.

Frequently, from his new home in the West, John Gordon would write of his interesting experiences. In these letters he would tell her of the wonders of his new home and of its wonderful people. Intuitively understanding the deep interest she felt in his new environments, he had arranged for her to

receive, regularly, copies of the leading newspapers. Georgiana, in this way, came to be informed of the progress of the campaign in which Gordon, and his friend Leigh, were so strenuously engaged.

A close student of, and hence familiar with, the political influences that for many years had operated in her native State, Georgiana knew of the unscrupulous methods of invisible government and had become wrought up over the campaign in the State of John Gordon's adoption. At times she would tremble for his safety. She knew of the intolerance and corrupting influences of this subtle power; that its influence was far-reaching, indeed; that its policy had always been, to debauch men if it could be done, —failing in that, then to destroy them. Willing tools, there were, at all times ready, for a price, to do their bidding. She knew, unless the people could be awakened to the truth, how unequal the contest was certain to be.

From her eastern home, Georgiana, with ever increasing concern, watched the course of the western campaign. With her it had come to be personal. John Gordon's cause was now her cause, also. She could not quiet the fear that he was in danger. As a girl she had not hesitated to fight for her brother.

As a woman, the man she loved was threatened, and—she was the same, loyal, courageous Georgiana.

Oh Woman! Unto thee we bow with reverence as thy inspiration lifts the soul of man unto the higher, greater things of life. No place for thy token upon the tilted lance, its spear-head drenched with the blood of God-made man! With gentle hand extended—with hearts blended, thou dost heal the wounds, impress of the iron heel, and staunch the vital flow.

CHAPTER XV.

Spiders, silver tipped, first charm,—then devour,—the unwary fly. Georgiana to the rescue. A School of Expression, versus The Western Educational Association.

WITH long, shrill, voice, the engine had announced the coming of the train. As if resentful of an unwarranted intrusion upon their wonted quiet, the long range of hills, rising from the western bank of the shallow stream, threw back the signal, in many-voiced echoes. The city had its usual welcome. As the long train of cars rolled, slowly, into the station, the air was filled with the rumbling noise of trucks, the hacking cough of the locomotive, and the shrill cries of competing cabmen. Bags and bundles in hand, passengers, worn with their long journey, crowded upon the platform.

At the end of the long avenue, upon a gently sloping hill, rose the capitol, a huge, imposing, structure, its copper covered dome glistening in the southwestern summer sun. From the center of the dome, towering above hills and buildings alike, a figure, symbolizing justice, lifted itself in proud

confidence of its high position. From its lofty station it seemed to look, from center to circumference, into every nook and corner of the State. Pendent from its extended hands, a balanced scale symbolized the principle, as it guaranteed the law, of "Equal rights to all, and special privileges to none."

Beyond the capitol, to the north, rose the tall buildings of the University. Inspired with the wholesome truth that "States are not rich in their wealth of mines, fields and forests, but in their youth," this institution was employing its activities in the cause of building up character,—characters of young men and young women. As if its founders had looked deep into the coming years and, with prophetic vision, had designed it to hold to its high purpose the needle of legislative and executive thought, the facade of this high institution of learning opened out upon, as it looked questioningly in the direction of, the capitol.

To the south of the capitol, with no magnetic pole to attract, with nothing save distilled and malted dollars with which to corrupt and compel, were to be seen, many places, operated with sanction of law, strenuously engaged in the business of breaking down and corrupting character. As though intent upon ambushing both learning and liberty, these sub-stations of vice were scattered, gorilla-like, upon

either side of the broad avenue, as, also, in the dark places of the city. In these cunningly woven webs, spiders, silver striped, first charmed—then devoured, the unwary fly.

To the north of the capitol building,—the high, visable embattlements of the university. To the south of the capitol,—the sunken, invisible, wire-entangled, trenches of vice. A stranger, unfamiliar with the methods of invisible government might think the State's capitol besieged.

It was! From the trenches at the south, through many secret, invisible, tunnels, the invisible, spectral government had been slowly, yet none the less surely, undermining the very seat of the people's government. One tentacle held, close to the monster's hairy bosom, tens of thousands of purchased illiterate votes. Others, cold and determined, threatened the departments of government. Another, more subtle than the rest, crept cautiously, yet with a fixed purpose, in the direction of the judiciary. Its slimy body planted before the doors of the legislative halls; its lips dripping with the blood of countless thousands of men, women and children. Drunk with its successes, the monster now looked, covetously, to the north,—where stand the university, the last bulwark between despotic, destructive power and the people's hope of liberty.

What was the message of Lamar? Did it say that liberty, to be enduring, shall flow from "invisible government?" Does it announce the doctrine that "the liquor traffic is the only foundation upon which a free people may stand?" Does it tell the sons and daughters of the West, that character must be sought through the vista, and across the threshold, of the saloon?

No! Ten thousand times, no! In his wonderful message to the sons and daughters of men, and women, Lamar bequeathed to posterity, these truths:

"Education is the guardian genius of Democracy! It is the only foundation upon which a free people may stand:—Intellect, the only dictator a free people may recognize."

To the north of the capitol building, are reared embattlements of thought, education and freedom. Their high mission is that of restoring government to the people. The problem, now confronting a deserving people, is, shall this high institution of learning, that it might live, be forced to bend the knee before the throne of invisible power? Shall its activities be directed by the people, who, in their wisdom, maintain it? Or shall it acknowledge as master, the forces that would consume it?

Comes the crisis! Vice, arrayed against learning,

must not succeed,—else the people are doomed. Of the two,—vice or learning,—which shall survive?

Among the last of the passengers to alight from the sleeper were two young women. Modestly, yet neatly attired, there was little about them to fix attention save, possibly, a hesitant manner such as may be often remarked of persons unused to the confusion, incident to centers of population. Assuredly, one would conclude, these young women, doubtless, were from the country. Their hair, modestly combed, straight back from the temples and coiled in low knots at the back of the head, was clearly out of harmony with the latest fashion. Their shoes, though small, were substantial and in keeping with their plain, serviceable clothes. Each wore shaded glasses. It would have been difficult to have even approximately guessed their respective ages.

Alighted from the train, unnoticed save by cabmen moved by prospect of gain, the young women eagerly pushed their way along the crowded platform, in the direction of the baggage car, ahead. Arrived there, the taller of the two, with many admonitions of caution directed to the baggage master, nervously awaited the unloading of a beautiful St. Bernard dog, which, at sight of his mistress, strained against his leathern collar, loudly barking his protestations

of canine delight in thus being restored to his rightful owner.

The smaller of the two women, seemingly unconcerned over the dog, was absorbed in carefully examining a leathern-covered case, such as often contain small typing machines frequently used by women secretaries while travelling. The truck finally loaded, the two women walked, beside it, to the office, deposited their checks, and received their property. Night had fallen upon the city and there was the problem of suitable lodging. After many inquiries, not unmixed with a sense of helplessness, they decided upon the leading hotel. Here they were assigned a suite of rooms, of modest price and furnishings, until, as the taller of the two explained to the clerk, they could decide upon permanent, and less expensive quarters. Tomorrow,—well our to-morrows are much like our yesterdays, and are to be determined, largely, by circumstances, as yet unrevealed to us.

Upon the register, in hand-writing betraying their nervousness, they had inscribed their names,—

“Edna and Theresa Strong.”

A group of men, but a moment before had lounged out of the bar and stood gazing directly and impudently, into the faces of the two unprotected strangers. One of the men, more inebriated than

the others, smiling confidently, stepped forward, intending to accost them, when, a tall Westerner, just arrived and waiting his turn to be assigned to a room, promptly stepped between the young women and the man who would have intruded himself upon them. With one quick movement of his left hand, the Westerner pushed the, would be, intruder, toppling, back among his fellows.

Not one word had been spoken. Head thrust slightly forward, he stood, quietly waiting whatever the situation might, next, require. Into his eyes had come a look of unutterable contempt. Not one, of the others of the group, had made the slightest movement, not one of them had spoken, in resentment of the Westerner's act. For a few moments they were engaged in helping their inebriated companion to regain his feet. Even he made no attempt to resent the affront. To the clerk, who, knowing the offended man as one of known courage, had, in an effort to prevent an unseemly disturbance in the hotel, leaped over the counter and was now trying to persuade him to depart, he insisted upon being left unhindered. He was now sobered.

"There's not going to be any further trouble!" he insisted. "All I care to do is to shake that fellow's hand. He's a gentleman! Up to a few minutes ago

I thought I was one, also! That damned liquor, though, has—”

“You are one!” said the Westerner, stepping forward, his hand extended. “You **are** a gentleman,—when you’re yourself. I’m sure. A few moments ago it wasn’t you. It was that stuff you paid for, over the bar. You thought you were consuming it, but, you were soon to discover as did we, that the liquor had consumed you.”

“You’re right,—absolutely right!” replied the completely sobered man, as he held the Westerner’s hand. “Between a human brain sober and a human brain drunk there is a wide gap. The mere claim to the title of gentleman will not span it.”

After the group had departed, the Westerner, addressing the clerk, remarked,—

“That fellow is a brave man!”

“Yes,” replied the clerk. “That is why everyone was so surprised.”

“And why surprised?” asked the Westerner.

“Why,—that he should have apologized.”

“Then, you folks don’t recognize real courage when you meet it,” the Westerner said. “It takes a great deal more courage to apologize, when we are wrong, than is required to fight,—right or wrong.”

The clerk was still trying to harmonize his con-

flicting views upon such a strange theory, when the bell-hop appeared.

"Show Mr. Leigh to his room!" ordered the clerk.

Happily, the two young women were unaware of the episode, happening in the lobby. They had thanked the tall stranger who had so politely stepped aside that they might register. This done, aware of the presence of a group of half-drunken men, and really frightened, they made for the elevator, not once looking back to discover the cause, or character, of the disturbance plainly to be heard.

Arrived in their rooms it required but a short time to enact a complete transformation. Could those, who may have observed them upon their arrival at the station, or while in the lobby, have seen them now, the change would have caused a decided revision of first impressions. The shaded glasses were nowhere to be seen. The luxuriant hair, of which each was possessed, was dressed most becomingly. The strong, heavy, shoes had given way to easy, little slippers, doubtless a welcome relief to aristocratic looking feet, peeping from under skirts of modern design. About them there was nothing to remind one of the timid, hesitant persons, arrived at the station, obviously excited by the noise and confusion, incident to the city. Restraint had given way to confident courage. In place of nervous fear had

come determination. They had journeyed to the West for a purpose, and, to accomplish that purpose, they were resolved.

"Georgiana," questioned the smaller of the two, "what will be the program for tomorrow?"

"As we have planned it, dear," replied the one addressed as "Georgiana." "As yet we know nothing. Tomorrow, we must locate the headquarters of the conspirators, then outline our work, systematically. Their main strength is in their secret alignments. Their business cannot stand the light of truth. That we shall succeed in unearthing their underground methods of controlling elections, I am confident. We must succeed. Not alone for John Gordon's sake but for humanity's sake. He and his friend Leigh are confronted with a task, almost superhuman. They are in more danger than they realize."

Her companion sat quietly listening. Geargiana, after a few moments, proceeded,—

"It is here as it is everywhere. Women feel, most heavily, the ruthless hand of that which your brother characterizes as "invisible government," and, as long as it is able to control men, it will continue to crush women. Little does it matter at whom its vice is aimed. Those who are injured most are the ones assaulted most. As the common enemy of

our sex, it will prosper until, as mothers, wives and daughters of men, we make common cause with men in aiding its destruction. As for me, I am determined to do my part." With such energy, coupled with an accent of finality, were these words spoken that no one would have thought of disputing them, much less her companion.

"But, Georgiana! What if Jack should discover us, and come to know what we, or rather you, are undertaking?" asked Elizabeth, who appeared to defer to her companion. "What—?"

"Elizabeth!" And Georgiana's voice, while touched with an accent of appeal, was positive. "He must not discover us. For us it would mean failure; for him it would mean ruin. I know the character of the men he is fighting and, I tell you, they hesitate at nothing. Furthermore, nothing short of complete exposure of their secret interlocking devices, will arouse men to the danger of permitting them, longer, to continue. There are tens of thousands of voters, good upright citizens, who care nothing, one way or another, about the liquor traffic. Yet, when confronted with the truth; that, not content with the privilege of manufacturing and selling their product, as their licenses permit, the liquor interests insist upon controlling the government. Not, alone, do they insist upon it, but, by crooked methods, they

are controlling it. Confronted with the truth, these tens of thousands of now indifferent voters will oppose this outrageous usurpation of their government. Many people may, and doubtless, consciously do, protect the saloon. But very few of them are willing to live under a liquor government. Nor will they any longer than the truth can be developed."

Georgiana had stepped to the window. From where she stood could be seen the moonlit city, its feet bathed in the red, muddy waters of the river that flowed from the hills above, its winding course pointing to the sea, near three hundred miles away. For a long while, the young woman stood, quietly, thinking. Then, as if some problem had been seriously debated and settled, she turned to her companion.

"Elizabeth! We are going to have their secrets and expose them! They are men. A determined woman, inspired by lofty purpose, can succeed where a man would fail." Seeing the look of wonder in the eyes of her friend, Georgiana hastened to add,—

"O, you need have no fear, dear. I shall so conduct myself, that, should all the circumstances ever be known, your brother shall have no cause, not the slightest, to disapprove."

Georgiana Boyer, now twenty-six years of age, had developed into beautiful womanhood. Of medium height, her slender, yet well rounded, figure, had

that easy, graceful motion that comes with frequent exercise and wholesome thoughts. Since childhood she had been trained to outdoor life. In swimming she excelled. Often, accompanied by her brother, she had breasted the currents of the Ohio, from shore to shore. By the death of her father, she had come into a rich estate. One of her first acts had been to dissolve her early betrothal.

Her brother, Dan, never content to study law, had developed a turn for mechanical engineering. In his shop, in the basement of the old home, he had evolved several useful inventions. Among these was a wonderful piece of mechanism, to be attached to wireless telegraph apparatus. So enthused had he, and Georgiana, become, over this, his most highly prized success, that wireless plants had been erected, one within the spacious grounds of their home, located in the outskirts of the city, the other on a farm, situated across the river, in the valley, belonging to their joint estate.

Dan Boyer and John Gordon had become fast friends. During his annual visits to "the Valley," Gordon would practice wireless telegraphy. From the station in the Valley, he would exchange numerous messages with Georgiana, in the city. In the study of telegraphy, proficiency may be had, only, by frequent practice.

Dan's most recent invention was a strange, assembling of intricate mechanism, which he had been pleased to characterise as a photo-periscope. This invention was to prove of invaluable service.

Decided to start for the West, Georgiana had called upon Elizabeth Gordon. Since Judge Gordon's death, following close upon that of his gentle wife, Elizabeth had remained in the Valley. To her, Georgiana confided all. Advised of her brother's peril, Elizabeth insisted upon going to him.

"Elizabeth," argued Georgiana, "I know how trying will be the strain for you to see, or be near, Jack, yet not make known your presence. I need not tell you, since you, now, know of our attachment, that the strain will be none the less severe for me. Yet, to disclose our presence would not only destroy all hope of success in our undertaking but, in addition, would result in great injury to him. To succeed, our plans must be known to none but ourselves. The situation calls for courage and sacrifice, I know. Confronted, not alone with danger to our own loved ones, but with humanity's supreme enemy, where is the woman of character who is unready to do her part. I know that I am ready. I am just as confident of you. Before we disclose our identity, we must have finished our work,—no matter what may happen in the meantime. By secret methods, only,

can and do succeed, the invisible power, opposed to the principles Jack Gordon and Robert Leigh are fighting for. By secret methods, only, may that power be exposed and undone,—and we are going to undo them.”

For answer, Elizabeth looked long, and earnestly, into the fearless eyes of her friend. Then with arms thrown impetuously about her she kissed her, impulsively.

The second day after their arrival in the city, the two young women presented themselves to the manager of the four story building, situated opposite the capitol. “They had but just come to the city,” so they informed him, “and were in search of a suitable location. It was their intention to open, somewhere in the West, a School of Expression, and, situation and accessibility duly considered, they had decided upon this city.”

The manager, alive to an opportunity to let offices, at present unoccupied, smiled affably and encouragingly, as the taller of the two, confidently, assured him that this section of the West was in need of an institution of such character. “By systematic advertising and personal effort,” she optimistically declared, “we are confident of building up a student body, drawn from all portions of the State, which

will doubtless prove a valuable asset to the community."

Enthusiastically, the manager assured them of the many advantages of the city, and, especially, of the part of the city wherein was situated the building in which they, now, were. Little did he know of schools of the character spoken of. His duty was to keep the premises rented, and, surely, these young women were in earnest.

Happily, he could not have known just how coincident with the plans of the young women it was, that two offices, en suite, upon the third floor, were vacant and to let. These, he remarked, were removed from the noises of the paved street and, doubtless, would prove desirable. Still, the applicants were hesitant. They would much prefer the offices, immediately above those so highly recommended. From the floor above, the windows gave upon the grounds of the capitol and the view was splendid, particularly of the river and the fringe of low hills in the distance.

"Could not the occupants of these rooms, above, be persuaded to exchange?" asked the taller of the two women, simply.

The manager turned upon them, astounded. The unreasonableness of the suggestion, though innocently proposed, staggered him. He almost regretted

his encouragement of their plan to build up a "School of Expression," whatever that might be. Such an arrangement would be out of the question, he told them. The present occupants overbid all competitors for those particular rooms, and had installed magnificent furnishings. Besides, in all their business dealings, they were exceedingly quiet; at times one would hardly realize their presence. Convinced they could secure no more suitable quarters, the offices, first shown them and immediately beneath the ones they seemingly preferred, were, apparently, reluctantly accepted. Nervously the rental was counted over and the receipt taken.

The next thing was furnishings. Few people, they confided to the manager, had any tangible idea of what was necessary to equip, properly, such an establishment. They were thankful, however, that most of it had been ordered and would soon arrive. For the present they might lodge in one of the rooms. It would require some time before they could get their venture under way, and there would be considerable expense. About to depart, the thought occurred to them that, having a few moments to spare, they would like, if it could be arranged and was convenient, to visit the rooms above and enjoy the view. The kindly gentleman, now in excellent frame of mind and wishing to please, cheerfully offered to

conduct them, and they were at once taken to the lift, and thence to the offices above. While being conducted through the building a short while before, they had remarked, traced in gilt letters, upon the frosted glass of the main entrance to these offices, the inscription, "Western Educational Association."

When told by their escort, who had preceded them, that the managing director of the "Association" was present, and would be pleased to have them enjoy the view from the windows of his office, the young women were visibly delighted.

"Oh, how grandly beautiful!" exclaimed the one introduced as Miss Edna. There had been introductions and in a manner strictly in keeping with the dignity of their several professions.

"How I should enjoy this view at sunset!" with intense enthusiasm.

For an instant "Edna" had removed the shaded glasses, and for that instant her fine brown eyes had rested upon those of the director, standing close by. They were really beautiful eyes. Somehow, to the director, they seemed encouraging, despite her plain, unpretentious appearance. Their appealing expression seemed to light up the fine oval face, with its really beautiful complexion, perfect teeth and exquisitely curved chin. All this the man, at her side,

took in at a glance. Her figure, too, though rather plainly attired, was well formed.

"Would you really enjoy the sunset view?" he asked, politely. "Then come, by all means, and see it." He would have added more when—

"Now that is very clever of you, Mr. Beerman," the girl said, appreciatively. Do you know that we are to be neighbors?"

"I am more than pleased to hear of it," he replied, courteously. "Why not begin being neighborly at once and come up this evening and view the sunset?"

"I—believe—I—will," absent-mindedly replied the girl, as she drank in the view once more. "That is," and her voice was still hesitant, "if you are sure it will not inconvenience you."

To this he hastened to quiet all doubt and it was agreed that the young women should come that evening. Upon leaving, Georgiana again remarked the inscription on the door, this time reading it audibly.

"Have you to do with educational work?" she asked of the director, interestedly.

"Very much so," was his quick response. "We teach practical political science."

His words were politely spoken, yet, it seemed to Georgiana, they masked a hidden meaning. She had lost nothing of his impressionable character. About

him was a manner, suave and pleasing, yet beneath it something sinister. Of middle age, he was tall, broad-shouldered and well preserved. His face, heavy featured and deeply flushed, suggested the man of determined will. His blond hair was carefully combed back from an intelligent forehead. A rather imperious air, gave one the idea that here was a man accustomed to command, brooking no opposition.

"And you?" he begged, "the manager tells me that you are to establish a School of Expression. May I be permitted to ask about your enterprise?"

"Oh, yes! you may do so and I shall be pleased to demonstrate the urgent need of our work," the girl hastened to assure him.

"You see," she added, "people as a rule become indifferent to the things that promote happiness,—real happiness. In the same ratio they grow careless of influences calculated to subdue, and even destroy, the social, refining atmosphere of our homes. They need an awakening. Every fireside should be attractive enough to hold, and entertaining enough to attract. This explains why we feel so sure of success. Our work once understood we can confidently rely upon the support of every home,—that is every home worth while."

"And those not worth while?" he asked, an

amused smile flitting over his face, "what about the homes not worth while?"

"There will not be any,—when our work is finished," she replied confidently. Looking up, her serious eyes caught the broad, incredulous grin that had now succeeded to the director's amused smile.

"It will require a great deal of courage and patience," he remarked. "A big undertaking for two young women. Strangers, here, too, are you not?"

"Yes, Mr. Beerman. We are alone,—now."

At the lift, bowing gracefully, the director reminded them of the evening sunset. His remarks, no doubt intended for both, were directly addressed to Georgiana.

Arrived at the hotel, the two were, visibly, nervous. Safely in their rooms,—

"Elizabeth!" Georgiana's voice was touched with a strange, cold, metallic ring.

"Elizabeth! We've got him,—and them! That fellow can be used to obtain the secrets of his whole band of conspirators. These secured, and exposed, then, and then only, the people, whose cause Jack and his friends are fighting for, will win. Truth, placed in the people's hands, will arouse and set this State free of the spectral, invisible government, of which this man is the dominating factor. A com-

manding force with men, though only through the use of his corrupting money, he will prove weak before incorruptible women. Like most of his kind, puffed up with success in debauching men, his conceit is the weak spot in his otherwise impervious armor. The thing to do is to pierce it and destroy, not him alone, but the entire organization!"

"But you, Georgiana? What of you?" cried Elizabeth, fearfully. "These men are conscienceless, and if you subject yourself to circumstances—"

"As I told you, day before yesterday, dear," interrupted Georgiana, "I shall do nothing of which Jack, should he ever know, and understand, would not approve, and," confidently, "I am sure he would understand."

For a long while they sat, silent, thinking deeply. The possibilities confronting the two young women were distressing, it is true, still, they were undaunted. During the afternoon Georgiana had, mentally, mapped a plan of campaign. To this she was determined to, resolutely, adhere.

"We must gain access to their secret deliberations and there is but one way to do it," at length she said, breaking the stillness.

That evening, as had been agreed upon, they viewed the sunset from the upper windows. All were rapturous over the truly delightful scene. The long

rays of the descending sun, as, slowly, it dropped below the range of distant hills, streaked the waters of the river, its colors varying with the changing currents.

Their host was most attentive, himself placing chairs, for his guests, before the open windows. As they entered the room, Georgiana, always on the alert, noticed a flat key, lying, carelessly, upon the wide mahogany table. At once she began to make mental calculations.

What if it should be missed and cause suspicion? she reflected. There was this probability, she had to admit,—and one that might lead to serious consequences. Still, if it proved to be the key to the entrance door, it might be made to unlock other things,—secret interlocking devices, perhaps. In her present state of mind, determined, as was she to know the secrets of this, so-called, Educational Association, the key seemed to beckon her.

As yet the campaign had not grown strenuous. The conspirators confident of power, were, as yet, but little concerned over the protests of the outraged people. Attacks made upon them and their corrupt methods brought only smiles of contempt. So far there had been nothing more than general charges. No one had offered concrete facts. And what if they did? Did not their invisible power control all

branches of government? A key, more or less, had not assumed enough importance to cause second thought. Georgiana accepted the chance fate had provided and, when the opportunity presented, possessed herself of the innocent-appearing object that, later, was to prove a useful ally.

They had now turned from the window and were admiring the handsome furniture, omitting no detail. One piece in particular, a cabinet of peculiar design, arrested Georgiana's attention. Tall, reared like a barricade before the door leading into an adjoining room, it seemed to be standing guard against any curious intermeddling from the next apartment. On the top, books were piled in careless confusion. It was plainly evident that this particular piece of furniture was seldom, if ever used.

Though outwardly composed, Georgiana's heart was pounding wildly. How strange the ways of fate! she was thinking. How often, circumstances, though they appear trivial, weave themselves into, and disarrange, the plans of men,—and women. Nor had Georgiana failed to observe that the director, since the afternoon, had been clean shaved. Upon one of the fingers of his left hand, sparkled a diamond of wondrous luster and beauty. His deportment, throughout the evening, had been faultless.

His remarks, however, had been directed, almost exclusively, to Georgiana.

"We are going to be real good, neighborly friends, are we not?" he proposed as, now again at the lift, he extended his hand.

"I am sure of it," Georgiana responded, cordially.

"At least we trust so."

He could not know of the slight shiver that shook her frame, as, in words so contrary to her real sentiment and purpose, she had so encouragingly replied to him. During all her life, until now, she had never acted falsely. How hard, indeed, would prove the task she had undertaken, she was just beginning to understand. Still, there was no thought of shrinking. Not unmindful of the risk to be incurred, her plans had been made, and,—there would be no recoil.

That night she wrote a long, urgent, letter to her brother, urging him to come West at once. He was to bring, with him, an expert mechanic and mechanician, one who could be depended upon for confidential service. This done, she went to bed. Her more timid, though no less loyal, companion, had long since, preceded her.

Far into the night, Georgiana lay, awake, thinking, planning. At length she fell asleep and dreamed,—of John Gordon.

CHAPTER XVI.

Strange doings of a School of Expression.
The way of a courageous woman. The photo-
periscope.

A WEEK had passed. Seven days of strenuous, racking, experiences. The rooms had now been furnished,—the equipment installed. Other paraphernalia, uncrated; was to remain at the freight house until needed. No one had remarked that much of the work had been done after nightfall. In one of the rooms, reserved as a sleeping apartment, so the young women declared, had been secretly placed a very peculiar piece of furnishing. During the day, and far into the night, Elizabeth had been busy, vigorously pounding the typing machine. Georgiana recited, or sang alternately. She was practicing, she told the director one day, when, as they were on the lift, he had complimented her voice. She advised him, also, that she and her companion were now about ready, and expected soon to organize their classes. Her acquaintance with the director was progressing rapidly. The day before, he had proposed boating on the nearby lake. To this she had

appeared hesitant, remarking, wistfully, that she knew it would be highly enjoyable, and that, later on, she might go.

Alone she had reflected that there was no time to lose. Except for certain connections to be made in the director's office, her preparations were now complete. To arrange these, the director must be drawn from his office. Should he again suggest the outing, she would accept the invitation. That day he had renewed the invitation, and they were to go that evening. The director was radiant. Whatever his plans may, at first, have been, there was now no doubt of his deep interest in this wonderful girl who, so strangely and modestly, had come into his world.

Several evenings past, Georgiana, with the aid of the stolen key, had introduced her brother and the mechanic into the secret caucus chamber. The dictagraph, snugly fixed inside the open fretwork covering the radiator, had only to be connected with the wires leading through the floor, and into the room below, where any curious person might, if so disposed, hear, and record, the slightest whisper, even, in the room above. Through the floor, back of the tall antique cabinet, a round hole had, already, been made. Through this opening, extending from the room beneath, was to be installed a hollow tube,

the upper section of which formed an elbow of peculiar design and workmanship and of the same color as the cabinet. This would rest upon the top of that interesting, but neglected, piece of furniture and, masked by the careless profusion of musty books, that, upon the occasion of her first visit, had not escaped Georgiana's keen survey of the room and its appointments, would in all probability escape detection upon the part of the director and his associates.

Could one have carefully examined the open, flaring face of this peculiar instrument, adjusted so that the interior of the room, with its occupants and furnishings, would be reflected upon the powerful crystal lenses it so carefully concealed, curiosity might have prompted a desire to visit the room below and with equal, if not greater, interest, examine a piece of mechanism, much resembling a camera, attached to the lower end of the same tube, firmly set upon a frame rising from the floor to the height of an ordinary man's shoulder. This strange instrument much resembled a photo-periscope. But an hour or two of opportunity was needed to complete the connections, and test its efficiency.

Georgiana was to go with the director, that evening, upon the lake. Had he but an inkling of that which was to be done during his absence, or even

of the surreptitious trespasses upon the privacy of his offices, his growing admiration for the girl he knew as "Miss Edna," might, and doubtless would, have received a decided set-back. In his complete ignorance of her purposes, his persistent longing for her companionship had become an obsession. She was different, he told himself, from any girl he had ever known. In this conclusion, Beerman was, doubtless, correct.

The campaign was becoming heated. Certain secrets, supposedly known only to the most trusted members of the secret organization, had been leaking. Puzzled, their efforts to locate the source baffled, the conspirators had, at length, become suspicious of each other. The "flying squadron," loaded with distilled and malted munitions, was hard at work. Gordon and Leigh were mercilessly exposing the corrupt practices of the invisible forces exploiting the State and stealing the people's government. The public mind was fast becoming aroused.

In his conversations with "Miss Edna," the director, of late had become boastful. One day she had expressed her great admiration for men who accomplished things; men of power over other men.

"She could never," she said, "look up to anyone of purely mediocre attainments."

By this time he was completely infatuated and anxious to please and attract her. While tactfully encouraging his devotion, the girl had permitted no advances. In a burst of vanity, he told her of his commanding position,—that he was the head of the real, though invisible, government of the State; that no one could be elected to high position without the consent of the organization of which he was the master. Georgiana simulated wonder, remarking how flattered she might be could she but merit the full confidence of one who, by the force of his own ability, had risen to such enviable station.

"Edna," the director said one evening, as they were standing upon the bridge, viewing the river, "you are so different from all other women. You never mention politics as do so many women nowadays. In every way you are superior." It was the first time he had so addressed her, and it was with difficulty that she restrained her resentment.

"I have my work to do," she replied, demurely. Then carelessly, "What are women becoming so frenzied over, now?"

"Votes for women, and against the saloon, in particular," he replied, deprecatingly. "I am glad you feel no interest in such things."

"I don't believe in destroying happiness," she answered, evasively. Nor did he notice the distinction. In his infatuation he was growing more confidential; would speak of the vicious attacks being made, upon him and his associates, by two reformers and their misguided friends.

He had, as was her plan, called upon her at the hotel, where Georgiana and Elizabeth still lodged. Upon these occasions the supposed sister was always near by. At times Beerman and Georgiana would stroll out upon the bridge. However much he planned for solitude she would always skillfully manage to avoid being with him alone. Once, when he had begged her to go for a drive in his car, she in a tone touched with regret, replied,—that while it would be, no doubt, nice and immensely enjoyable, she hesitated to do anything which might cause him to think less of her as a woman. Always they returned before twilight was far advanced.

At last came the night when in secret caucus the conspirators determined to dispose of Gordon. Hastily she had scratched a warning note, and, at the close of Gordon's speech, her identity disguised, delivered the note in person. How his presence had thrilled her! When she had clasped his hand in both her own, leaving with him the crumpled note, how she yearned to reveal herself to him. In the long

silences of the night she tossed, sleepless, upon her pillow. "Was he in immediate danger?" she asked herself. "Had she done right?"

Elizabeth, unconscious of the new turn of affairs, was sleeping soundly.

It was late morning when the "extra," cried upon the streets by eagerly competing newsboys, announced the mysterious disappearance of John Gordon. From his room in the hotel, under circumstances strangely indicating foul play, he had been, strangely, abducted. Upon the streets and around the lobbies of hotels and public buildings, men, in groups, were excitedly discussing an outrage which, none doubted, was the answer of invisible government to an attack upon its arrogant, intolerant power. Georgiana, worn with the tremendous strain of the night, had not yet awakened from her belated sleep. Elizabeth, faring better, had suffered as well. Knowing of her brother's presence in the city, yet unable to see him, her self-denial had been hard to bear. But for the splendid courage of Georgiana, whose sacrifices she knew was even greater, Elizabeth would have yielded to her sisterly devotion and gone to him. The two had talked of venturing in disguise, to hear him as he addressed the people,—but dared not risk it. Not that they feared discovery. They doubted their own self-control. As

women they were laying their offering upon the altar of humanity and patriotism; their duty called for sacrifice as women only can endure. It was all that they, as women, could do. As women, they would bravely do their part.

Elizabeth had retired to bed early in the evening. Georgiana, though worn and tired, remained at the secretly installed instruments that were unfolding the secrets of the conspirators gathered in the rooms above. Through the periscope she could, plainly, see them. Gathered about the managing director, their faces were blanched with fear and distrust. As if fearing some hidden presence, one of them had glanced, inquiringly, about the room. Convinced of the impossibility of an intruder, he resumed his accustomed seat. Georgiana, whose heart, at the thought of discovery, had almost ceased to beat, drew a deep breath of relief. Now the dictograph was disclosing their conversation as, with voices subdued, they reviewed the happenings of the past few days. Exposure of their secret plans and alignments had disconcerted and angered them. Some of their paid auxiliaries were not present, nor had they been invited. Georgiana, aware that suspicion centered upon some of their own co-workers, smiled with a woman's satisfaction. Her greatest fear had been

that, as a precautionary measure, they might decide upon some other place of meeting.

Her secret enjoyment, sweet though it was, gave way to hopeless frenzy, as the dictograph, faithfully repeating words of the conspirators, told her of their decision to "do away" with John Gordon. Stunned by that which had been disclosed, her mind for a moment refused coherent thought. Mechanically her hand had continued to turn the muffled lever of the camera; she heard not one word more. When their scheme was to be put into execution was still their secret.

With the next few moments came calmer reflection. John Gordon must be warned. Somehow the thought quieted her. Advised in time, he would expose their conspiracy. Then they would not dare molest him. That they would act so quickly she did not dream. She dared not tell Elizabeth, and had gone into the night alone, risking detection, to deliver the note of warning.

All the way she ran, reaching the outskirts of the assembled crowd but a few moments before Gordon had ceased speaking. Her breath was coming short and quick. It had occurred to her torn mind to call someone out of the audience, and send the note to him. Upon reflection, the fear that something might happen to prevent its delivery, caused her to aban-

don a course that might fail of its purpose. Besides, among all that vast throng, she knew not a soul. There was a possibility of her warning note falling into the hands of one of Gordon's political enemies.

As these thoughts crowded her brain, her gaze remained fixed upon the man who was speaking. Once, as he looked in her direction, she felt as though he was addressing himself to her.

"When but a few years ago I stood upon the banks of the beautiful river that threads the valley of my boyhood home"—he was saying, in his peroration. Under the weight of the memories his words had aroused, her heart almost ceased its beating. To her mind came a vision of the old mill pond; her struggles in the icy water. She could hear him calling,—his soul calling to her soul. What would she not have given, could those few precious moments, sweet in spite of the cold and danger, be lived over, once more! And the evening upon the river bank; when he had said good bye!

"Yes, dear, it is true!" she murmured, the realities of her present environment eclipsed, for one fleeting moment, by the exquisite happiness that was hers. Not until she had sensed his voice as, completing the remainder of his sentence, he said,—
"looking out into the great West, dreamed of a people courageous to face the enemies of liberty and

civic justice—" did she fully awake to her surroundings.

Then came the day after,—the harrowing, heart-breaking hours of the morning.

The shock prostrated them. For the the first time Georgiana was completely unnerved. As, with each heavy intake of breath, her bosom would rise and fall, her heart seemed like a lump of ice, sharp and cutting. A knot in her throat pained, excruciatingly. For a long while she could only stare through the open window, wondering if it could be true. She had felt so secure, after her warning,—so certain that he would open the little crumpled note,—her note,—and promptly denounce the conspirators. After long hours of wakeful dreaming, she had fallen asleep,—dreaming of him. In the midnight vision she could still see him,—standing there upon the platform, his dark hair fallen across his brow; standing there appealing to that vast concourse of people to throw off their yoke of bondage; to break the chain that held them prostrate at the feet of an invisible spectral power, slowly, but surely, wresting from them the last vestige of their freedom.

"Take the Koran or the sword!" he had declared, "was the Moslem cry along Mediterranean's shores. And men yielded but not for the Koran's sake: 'Take the blighting misery and want; the vice,

the crime and death,—the mad, cruel, relentless, hopeless death,—that flows from the distilled and malted throne of wanton, selfish greed' is now the despot's rude command. Whip in hand, he drives our loved ones from our hearthstones and our homes, into debauchery, deadlier than Koran and sword combined."

O, how she yearned to range herself beside him, joining woman's tears to his masterful words, and, with him, pleading for the courage of men to rise in defense of the love of home.

"There is a market for your loved ones," he had said to them, "Let us fix the price." The silence was ominous as, in slow, measured tones, he told them how the industry they had been voting to sustain would perish should it be denied raw material.

"The only raw material it can use is your loved ones," he declared.

"In order to continue its existence it must have your children,—your sons and daughters. Not to refine but to corrupt, debauch, and destroy!"

"And yet," he reminded them, "knowing this to be true, men continue to cast their ballots in favor of these open markets, consciously registering their consent,—**that their homes be ravaged and their children corrupted.** God forbid that I shall ever cast a vote like that!"

“Did I say there is a market for your loved ones?” he continued. “Let me correct myself! For, although you refuse to name a price upon even the least of them, there are in this fair city, as shown by the record of the permits granted, more than three hundred such markets,—each and every one of them strong enough, and willing, to take your loved ones from you, at their own price and **without** your consent.”

After a long while her thoughts drifted back to the Valley. What wonderful panoramas of memory float from the ashes of romance,—the heart burnings of the long ago! It was then she fell, softly asleep.

It was Elizabeth who thought to telegraph Leigh. Together she and Georgiana visited the hotel where Jack had lodged. Mingled with the crowd, in the excitement no one gave them second thought. Other than that Gordon was last seen as he had gone to his room, nothing was known. The stains upon the bedding, the red spots along the hall, left no doubt. He had been the victim of a tragedy. Beyond the lift there was no clue.

“O, why did I not go to him and tell him of his danger instead of relying upon that note?” Georgiana moaned. For a moment, off her guard, she had surrendered to her grief. Elizabeth, who had been kept in ignorance of the circumstances of the night

before, looked up, wondering what could be her meaning. Her own distress was such that she hardly knew what to do and began to fear that the strain, heavy indeed for them to bear, was proving too much for her friend.

Together, from place to place, they hastened, seeking for some clew to the horrible mystery. But no one knew anything of John Gordon. In desperation, the two distracted women thought of the dog. Quickly they brought him to the scene of the tragedy, but, he, though unusually intelligent for his species, had not been trained for work of this character. In despair even this slight hope was abandoned.

Returned to their rooms, they discussed plans of search and rescue but there was no starting point. It was the opinion of the police that, had his assailants intended murder, they would not have risked carrying him away with no clue. No tangible course could be determined upon. Among Gordon's friends, Georgiana, alone, knew where evidence could be had. Had she not known of the far-reaching power of those whom she must accuse she would have informed the police. The conclusion was, at length, forced upon her, that hope lay in another direction.

For a long while she sat, in deep study, face to face with the most difficult problem of her young life. In a way she blamed herself. What she had

done had been prompted, it was true, by desire to aid the one she loved. Yet it had brought him harm. Regardless of consequences, it was her duty to save him. All seemed to depend upon her. Of first importance was the task of discovering where the conspirators had taken him, and to accomplish this,—there was but one way.

Though it had been her plan to encourage the infatuation, and thereby gain the secrets of the director, still she had never sought him. Now she was growing desperate. Resolved to find John Gordon, she determined to seek Beerman. The director knew. Conscious of her own strength, Georgiana decided that Beerman should give up his secret.

Three long harrowing days dragged by. Still there was no trace of John Gordon. To Georgiana and Elizabeth the moments seemed ages. Leigh was doing everything possible to be done. As yet there had been no developments. During these three days no one had entered the offices of the conspirators,—not even the director. During the first two days, the continued absence of the director was disquieting. Then Georgiana began to reason,—and hope. Beerman had, no doubt, gone away on some mission. What mission could it be except one that involved the whereabouts of John Gordon? Elizabeth, nerves on edge, but for the sake of keeping up a semblance

of busy industry, pounded the machine, mercilessly.

On the third day the suspense was broken. There was a revival of the customary activity in the rooms above. Still there was a difference. Voices of the occupants of the room were low. Men moved about with stealthy footsteps. As if by common agreement, no mention was made of John Gordon. Beerman looked tired. His clothes, usually immaculate, were in careless disorder. Nothing lost of his authority, however, he was giving orders and with abrupt directness. At times, his clenched fist would fall upon the table, emphasizing his imperious will. Telegrams, in cipher, were being sent to every part of the State. The hidden power,—the invisible government, able to control the people, was proving itself the people's master, brooking no interference. Polite, at times even obsequious bearing, toward certain men in public office, had given way to abrupt, despotic rule. Men used to being consulted as associates, were now being ordered to do the bidding of their Master.

Georgiana, from her point of vantage, witnessed all. She was impatient for the director to be alone. Still, though she hated, and wanted only to betray him, Georgiana could not but admire, in this man, the tremendous force of character that marked his every act.

In the late afternoon, he was at last alone. It was her opportunity, and her purpose fixed, she did not hesitate. Leigh was to speak that night, and the platform was being erected in front of the building, occupied, in part, by the conspirators. Something might happen to interrupt and cause delay. That something unusual would mark the evening, Georgiana could not doubt. The unknown friend of the cause for which Gordon and Leigh were fighting,—the mysterious, unknown, who had been, so industriously, unearthing the secrets of the conspirators, and supplying these proofs of duplicity and corruption to the champions of the people's rights,—yes, Georgiana, was certain that something unusual, even startling, would happen before the evening was over. Beerman had just lighted a fresh cigar when the telephone rang.

"Oh, I have called you, and called you, the last two days," complained a voice he at once recognized. It was the first time she had taken the initiative, and he was flattered.

"I'm so sorry I was not here, little girl," and his voice, low and soft, betrayed a note of longing. "I have been thinking of you so much, while away, and wanting to see you. Did you miss me?"

"Oh, so much! I too have been thinking of you, all day,—wondering if anything had happened to

you. Did you have a pleasant trip?" Georgiana almost dreaded the answer.

"Well, it was at least an exciting one," said the Director, chuckling.

"Tell me about it," the girl begged, "I am interested to know."

"Really, are you?" with a touch of tenderness that made Georgiana bite her lips. "Are you sure it is not mere curiosity?"

"Far from it," she quickly answered, with an earnestness she made no attempt to conceal. Its meaning was, however, quite different from the Director's understanding of it.

Gergiana was now plunging into the task she had undertaken, determined to succeed. Impelled by the thought that this man held the key to the mystery surrounding Gordon, upon the unraveling of which depended his safety and, possibly, his life, she would stop at nothing save her womanly honor. She had taken one key from his office. The key to Gordon's whereabouts she would steal from his confidence.

"It is a long story and one I prefer not to confide to the phone," at length said Beerman, hesitantly. He was thinking that her awakened interest might be capitalized to break in upon her reserve.

"Listen, little girl," he added hastily, "why not go for an hour's drive after sundown. We may then

talk uninterrupted. Just for one hour?" he pleaded.

As Leigh was to speak that night, Beerman had determined to hear what he might have to say. He had planned to listen from his window above. To do so required his early return, but there would be one hour. All day he had been impatient to see Georgiana. During the day he had thought of calling her on the telephone, but the presence of his associates gave him no opportunity to do so. This had irritated him.

"Do you think it will be just right for me to go?" Georgiana asked, her voice touched with indecision. It would be entirely so, he assured her, else he should not have proposed it. Besides, the day had been warm and the cool breezes of the evening would refresh them. Evidently convinced, she consented.

CHAPTER XVII.

Incidents of an automobile ride. Georgiana obtains a secret. What an elevator may do, —in an emergency.

THE evening brought changes. The Director's clothes, now faultless, betrayed more than usual care. Georgiana, discarding for the occasion her rather Quakerish dress, had donned a suit of cool, soft material that emphasized the beauty of her graceful figure. Her hair, too, was done in a way, modest yet becoming to her fine features and perfect skin.

As Beerman drove up, Georgiana was waiting. No time was lost in getting the car under way. After the girl had been seated, Beerman grew strangely silent. He seemed to be searching for a word,—the right word to say—yet not disclose the mood that had come over him,—trying to solve some element of doubt that had entered his mind. Under his searching gaze the girl colored, slightly. Quick to meet the demands of a situation her nimble mind had already foreseen, Georgiana looked up shyly and, as though inviting his approval.

"I was beginning to fear you were growing tired of associating with purely professional appearances, so made an exception of this evening, just for you."

At this his face brightened. He was delighted with her ingenious frankness. That, to please him, she had changed her mode of dressing, spoke volumes,—more than her lips had ever said. The look of doubt gave way to one of radiant happiness. In doing this, she could have been moved by one impulse only,—the wish to please him.

They were now threading the avenue leading into the open country. Anxious to get away from the city, he was increasing their, already rapid speed. He had readily accepted her explanation, remarking her wonderful beauty under the changed conditions, and was now in a glorious frame of mind. With carefully studied purpose, she had taken a chance and, so far, had won. All now depended upon her tact in following up her advantage. The test would prove severe, she knew, for never, in all her life, had she so completely hated anyone. Still she must accept, encourage even, this man's devotion. At the thought her throat became choked with anger,—her face flushed with shame. The hot tears would not be held back. To hide her emotion, she feigned to be deeply absorbed in the throbbing machine. They

were marking the miles swiftly. Soon they were in the open country, and he quickly slowed down.

"Edna," he whispered, as the car was barely creeping along. "Did you really miss me? Tell me again."

"Every morning and evening, I looked for you on the lift," she answered. "Once, I even started to go up and knock on your door." Now she had drawn her lower lip between her teeth and was biting almost savagely.

"Then, dear, you're at last learning to care. Isn't it true? Surely your woman's intuition has long since told you of my devotion—"

"Of course, I think of you very often, indeed," Georgiana evaded. She had thought of him,—thought of him as the one who had committed an outrageous assault upon Jack Gordon. "But you went away leaving no word, and I could not understand it," she was playing her part bravely, and her tone was the least bit complaining. "I almost came to believe that those men, who have been assailing you, had somehow overcome and injured you."

Her last words were aimed directly at his vanity and the shaft stung.

"Overcome me!" he exclaimed, contemptuously. "Me? Not much. It was just the other way." The thought of being overcome by anyone was, to him,

distasteful. For the woman he loved to so believe, was more than his vanity could bear.

"We've got that fellow so he can't, very well, overcome anyone," he boasted.

There was no feigning now. As Beerman's words, —words that might mean anything,— fell upon her, for an instant her heart seemed gripped in a vise. Her frame shuddered as with a chill.

Controlling herself with such strength as she could command,—

"Are you sure?" Georgiana questioned, her voice slightly wavering. "You are saying so little, I just can't quite get your meaning. Can't you see that I am imagining everything? I've been so worried and alarmed, the strain has left me quite unnerved." She was telling the truth. Her heart was indeed troubled,—though not as Beerman supposed. In his mistaken conception of her emotion, however, he found encouragement.

"Now! Now!" he sympathized. "You mustn't be so distressed over me. I've told you no more to avoid troubling you. Besides, there are some things in which a woman would feel no interest."

Beerman had stopped the car and had taken her hands. They were little hands, and cold. Georgiana was finding it difficult. Resolved to hasten matters,—

"If you would only believe in me," she said wistfully, a note of regret plainly insinuating itself. "But you don't, and I am floundering in the dark. Is it possible that you think me incapable of feeling,—indifferent to the things affecting the man I love?"

"Her words, spoken so earnestly, their true meaning unsuspected by Beerman, filled him with a longing to hold her,—to tell her of his complete trust; of his purpose to withhold such matters, only, as might shock her tender sensibilities. He had freed her hands and, arms extended, leaned forward reaching for her,—enraptured.

"Edna!" Beerman was saying, as she felt his arm across her shoulder. "Edna!"

But with her released hands she was holding him back. In the horrible experience of the moment, she had forgotten,—remembered nothing except this insult being offered her by this creature whom she despised beyond expression. The mere touch of his hand upon her shoulder had driven every drop of blood from her heart. In place of the warm fluid had come a cold, hard, lump, in which there was not one sympathetic throb. Looking into the eyes of this despicable, hated, thing beside her, she could almost see the red stains upon the covering of the bed and

along the hall, of the hotel, as she had witnessed them the morning following Jack Gordon's disappearance. As Beerman leaned toward her, she remembered the night she had watched him, he and his confidential associates, there about the table in his room. As he addressed her, his voice low, she could almost hear him, as she heard him that evening, demanding that John Gordon be "done away with." Oh! how she hated him! Desperation gave her strength. Her whole being was centered in the one impulse to strike,—to repel this hated thing, that, with passionate kisses, would soil her lips,—lips she had dedicated to the memories of one short moment in the icy waters of the old mill pond in the "Valley."

Beerman, transfixed with surprise and astonishment, drew back his arms. Slowly they fell upon his lap. His eyes stared straight into the defiant ones confronting him.

What did this mean? This girl, who had received and encouraged his advances, confessed to care even, what was she attempting? Was she after all but an adventuress? Surprise was now giving way to indignation. His face, for a while bloodless, was now become flushed.

"Well!" he exclaimed, when, at length, he found

words. "What sort of a deal is this?" he demanded. As though much depended upon her answer he waited, frowning—

For a moment he had been bewildered, but now was himself—the same masterful man she had known before.

Like a flash from the sky his voice recalled her,—to herself. It brought back to her mind the purpose of her coming; her resolve to secure from this man the secret he possessed,—the secret that would save Jack Gordon. She, and no one else, could save him, and only as she had planned. Yet what had she done? Beside her was the man upon whose complete confidence and trust in her, depended everything. His distrust meant ruin,—possibly death, for Jack Gordon.

Her brain was working fast. With lightning speed, every incident of the evening passed before her mind, in rapid succession. She had committed a blunder. Now, she must regain his confidence. Fortunately, she had not spoken,—had not framed into words, the real sentiment she bore this man. Could she not make it appear that her just indignation arose from another cause? His words, just spoken, carried the conviction of an aroused distrust. He had taken the offensive; to win back his confidence

in her she must put him upon the defensive. Might she not appear offended, and he the one who gave offense? She must seek refuge behind his distrust.

"Do you realize," suddenly demanded Georgiana, imperiously, "that I am a woman, and of the kind that dream of being a part of the big things of life? Especially of the things concerning the man I may love, and who may profess to love me? Of one thing, sir, am I convinced. There can be no real love except it go, hand in hand, with full and complete confidence. Mr. Beerman, a man, for a time, may be infatuated with a woman, and yet not repose trust in her. But he cannot, at the same time, both love and distrust her. Refusing to trust her, implicitly, he is in no position to offer love. He may think he loves her, but does not, and is only deceiving himself, as he also deceives her. After a time the awakening comes, followed by disaster."

"That which I have said of men, Mr. Beerman, is, equally, true when applied to women. If one of my sex offers love, while withholding confidence, then that which she offers is mere counterfeit. For my part I have no secrets to withhold, nor shall I allow myself to trust in a love that refuses to trust mine."

Wonderingly the director had listened, abashed before the storm of her vehement protest. Now he was

beginning to feel uneasy, stupid. The girl was indignant, it was plain to be seen, and this could arise only from a feeling, real or imaginary, of some remissness upon his part. As she finished speaking he laughed quietly. His face at first distorted with anger, now softened.

Georgiana had assumed an offended air. Yet there had been not the least suggestion of complaint. Surprised, Beerman was visibly impressed, and, none the less, pleased. As she proceeded the girl's voice had softened. Ever watchful, the Director imagined he could detect a note of pleading. Nor could he deny the reasonableness of her demand. For many years he had been thrown with women whose standards of values were quite different from those Georgiana had just announced; women who were not so exact in their demands upon men, and who preferred to be shielded, or kept in ignorance, of details fraught with worry and care. This insight into womanly character that demanded trust for trust, while it occurred to him as being impracticable, was none the less refreshing. He was flattered, too, at the thought that this girl desired and demanded the complete confidence of the man she loved. Ignorant of her affection for John Gordon, he believed she had meant it

for himself. All thought of suspicion had now vanished from his mind.

"But Miss Edna," he began to assure her, when Georgiana had ceased speaking, "I have not denied you my confidence and I do trust you completely. Few women, however, would care to be told certain things, often of serious character, that happen in the dealings of men in my position. These frequently require vigorous, and sometimes secret, action. There is always, too, the chance of publicity, likely to involve one's reputation and even personal safety. Indeed, most women, fearing the consequences that might extend even to them, prefer to know nothing of these matters."

"Such women are mere mice!" exclaimed Georgiana with emphasis. "Their standard is too generally fixed for us all. I am not of that school. The man I love must be content not only to share with me his happiness, but must allow me to share his burdens. He must let me fight with him and for him. If I remember correctly there is a certain fable that tells of how a very little mouse once saved a real lion. I have an ambition to symbolize this moral, but only in its daring courage and fidelity."

She smiled, dreamily, and raised her eyes, slowly,

to Beerman's big, strong shoulders. As if impressed with his strength, she added, praisingly,—

“But you are such a great big lion.”

They were far out from the city. He had glanced at his timepiece and started the car. Soon they were creeping, slowly, over a smooth piece of road stretching along the foot of the hills. As she was so frankly expressing her views of woman's rightful part in an existence grounded in mutual love, he had been silent, listening to the end. That she wished to fight with him was pleasing. She had, during these few moments, developed a personality he had never understood in her. A close student of human nature, his mind began to speculate upon the value of her power of convincing analysis. With such a companion beside him, ready, with her woman's tact, to aid him, he could face, with increased assurance, the growing menace of “Woman's Right” to a voice in determining governmental policies.

Her last words, too, had struck home,—had flattered him. Slightly pressing his arm against her shoulder, he began to tell her of the campaign waging against him and his organization, of how the people had become aroused, and that he was preparing to fight as he had never fought before.

Instinctively she knew she had won,—that she

would at this hour obtain the secret knowledge that would enable Gordon to be rescued by his friends.

"That is why I was so wrought up while you were away," she encouraged. "How was I to know that some of those desperate men had not done you some injury?" she demanded. "Had my fears been justified, and had you trusted me with your confidence, I might have proven how much a certain little mouse of a woman, could, and would have done, for her lion." To herself she was thinking:—

"What would I not have done for Jack Gordon?"

Beerman, now fully convinced of the girl's loyalty, and, under the spell of the moment, wishing to prove his complete faith in her, told everything,—reserving nothing. He spoke of the strange leakings of their secrets; plans discussed by the conspirators at no time other than in their most secret caucuses. When he disclosed, to her, that two of their associates were under suspicion, Georgiana, unable to restrain a smile, turned her face from him.

"We have a very strange situation in our office, Edna," he confided to her. "It's disconcerting and, in spite of every precaution, has, so far, completely baffled us. We've set spies upon several of our members; men upon our pay roll and sworn to secrecy. Among them are fellows who can't afford to let their

connection with us be known. Still, though we suspect them, we are compelled to provide for them; else they would turn against us. The only way to hold that kind is with a silver chain."

For a moment, or two, Beerman stared, gloomily, ahead. After a long, deep breath, he continued,—

"To locate the fellow who is betraying our secrets," he said vehemently, "I would stop at nothing. and when I do locate the low, sneaking scoundrel——"

Beerman did not say what might be done. With a sudden jerk he sent the car, speeding, ahead, his hands clutching the wheel, savagely. Georgiana, who, with little effort, could have located the culprit, trembled at the significance of Beerman's uncompleted threat.

Another moment, the Director, who seldom yielded to any display of anger, slackened the speed of the car, until, once more they were barely moving over the smooth road. Asking forgiveness for his momentary fit of anger, and, as if all thought of the disturbing 'leak' had escaped his mind, he continued his recital of the things that were, and had been happening. To please this girl he was doing that, which, in another, he so bitterly condemned.

In detail, Beerman described the kidnapping of

John Gordon. They had not intended bodily injury, he told the girl, but Gordon had fought and it had become necessary to subdue him.

"Was he seriously injured?" Georgiana asked. In spite of her wonderful will, her voice was unsteady.

"No! Not dangerously so!" said Beerman, carelessly. "His right arm is broken. There are a few cuts, more or less."

The assurance that Gordon was not dangerously injured filled Georgiana's troubled heart with no small sense of gratitude. She felt almost kindly toward this man at her side, who, having it in his power to destroy, had not done so. Her heart began to pulse with renewed hope. If Beerman would disclose Jack's whereabouts she would be really encouraged and thankful. Now, more than ever, she must play her part to the end.

"Now that we've got him, what are we going to do with him?" she asked, looking up, interestedly. She was looking straight into Beerman's eyes. It had called for every bit of self control at her command.

Beerman had not failed to note that she had spoken in terms of mutual concern, as if, now, they were, actually, working together.

"We're going to hold him,—entertain him as our guest, for awhile," the director chuckled, evidently

pleased with his own words. Then, as if the plan had been fully decided upon,—

“We’re going to hold him until he signs a sworn statement that the charges of corruption, he has brought against us, are deliberate falsehoods; that he was paid to make them, and that the crowd he has been working with, and who have been backing him, are a bunch of crooks.”

Beerman was now visibly excited. His words had come, slowly, deliberately, and with a finality that could not for one moment be doubted.

“In any case,” he added, “he will not get loose until after the election,—if then. As for his friend Leigh, he, too, had better be careful. We have offered to do the right thing with each of them, but can’t do anything with them. Of course I can’t help admire their honesty, but we are not going to let considerations of that kind ruin our business.”

Georgiana could, with difficulty, contain herself. The cool assurance of Beerman angered her almost to the breaking point. Indignation at the thought of an attempt to force Jack Gordon to sign such a statement as the Director had mentioned, aroused her resentment as few things could. How she hated this man at her side!

Beerman now related his experience while absent

from the city,—how they had surprised Gordon,—how he had struggled and the necessity for reducing him to insensibility. They had debauched the night watchman, then, distrusting him, had taken him with them. The policeman, on the beat, had, for a long time, been, secretly, on their payroll. There had been no trouble from that source. This public servant, paid to protect the public, had accepted tribute from another paymaster and been induced to desert the public.

They had loaded their unconscious victim into an automobile, ready at hand, and, in this, had conveyed him to the coast. It had required but a few moments more to convey him on board "The Invisible State," a vessel, in the harbor, owned by the conspirators. The vessel was anchored a half mile from the shore, the crew in charge under strict orders to permit no one to approach except with written permission from Beerman himself.

With no small degree of pride of this successful accomplishment of a deliberate outrage, Beerman told his story, interrupted, at intervals, by his low chuckles of undisguised, gleeful, satisfaction. To Georgiana the moments had been harrowing. At times, when Beerman would give way to spasms of laughter, she would urge him to go on with the re-

cital. The hour was almost gone. There was more,—much more,—she wished to know,—must know, and, another opportunity might never come.

“How can you send permission, or communicate with the captain, unless you allow some one to deliver it—on board?” Georgiana questioned, absently.

“Easy enough by wireless,” said Beerman, carelessly. “The vessel belongs to us and we use our own private code.”

In reply to Georgiana’s tactful questions, the director described the vessel in detail. In this way she came to know that the wireless operating room was in the cabin opening out upon the deck. At once she began to speculate upon using this means of communicating with Gordon.

Beerman was pleased to note Georgiana’s evidently growing interest. To him it proved nothing less than a deep concern upon her part in his personal welfare. Some of her questions amused him. He could not understand why she should be so deeply interested in the number of men in charge; the location of the cabins; the most direct route to that part of the coast. Still he told her all she asked to know.

Tactfully, Georgiana led him into discussion of Jack Gordon. In this way she learned that Beerman had given orders to the captain to treat Gordon con-

siderately. Of evenings, he was to be permitted to stroll upon the deck. He also informed her that Gordon's right arm was in splints; that, as a precaution, against any attempt at escape, while strolling on deck, his left arm was strapped to his side.

"Truth is," said Beerman, "we wish to win him over to our side, if this can be done."

"What if he refuses, either to come over to you, or to sign the statement you are to demand of him?" asked Georgiana. "What then?"

"What then?" he repeated, his face drawn in a hard smile. "In that case I should not be surprised, some day, to hear that he has fallen overboard,—accidentally, of course."

Georgiana asked no more questions. Her heart had almost ceased to beat.

Rounded the loop, they now headed for the city. Beerman was regretting that certain affairs of vast business importance required his early return. He had much desired a more thorough understanding. However, with a girl like Miss Edna one must proceed cautiously. More in love than ever, he was deceived into thinking that she cared for him. If it could be managed, he would call for her next evening and they would drive far out into the country. He could then earnestly urge his devotion. She

could now have no doubt of his complete confidence. Trust should beget trust.

"How would you enjoy a long, long drive, tomorrow evening?" he proposed, gently, as he handed her out of the car.

"Immensely!" replied Georgiana.

That night Leigh delivered his great speech in front of their building. As promised, he exposed the hidden power of the conspirators. At the end of his speech, when he had reached his hotel, Georgiana phoned him to take the train in the early morning.

Upon her return from the ride with Beerman, Georgiana hastened to call a conference. They met in the rooms where their operations had been conducted,—Georgiana, Elizabeth and the mechanician. Dan, having returned to the Valley, there was no one, now, upon whom she could depend. Georgiana knew, in advance, what was to be thrown, that night during Leigh's speech, upon the screen. It was certain that a thorough investigation of the secret caucus chamber would follow, and, with it, exposure of the real character and purpose of Georgiana's "School of Expression."

Until now the leakage of the secrets of the conspirators, which had so baffled and disconcerted Beerman, could, reasonably, have been expected to be charged to infidelity upon the part of some of his

own associates. But, the films, to be thrown that night upon the canvas, could have been obtained only in one way. With no possibility of doubt these pictures would prove that some one, in some way, had been busily, and surreptitiously, photographing, and that the pictures had been taken from a position inside the secret caucus chamber.

As concerned the charges of corruption, the wholesale purchase of illiterate voters, and the debauchery of men, as was being so determinedly denounced by Leigh, such assertions, regardless of the truth, Beerman and his friends could deny. But the films! Pictures, thrown upon the screen, showing, even to the smallest detail, the furnishings of their secret meeting place! Photographs, true to life, exposing secret conferences between Beerman and men holding positions of public trust! Films, thrown upon the canvas, reproducing, word for word, these secret negotiations; the distilled and malted dollars being counted and handed over!

There was no way of getting around the accusing pictures. The secret chamber would be stripped of furniture even, in the effort to unearth the source by which the inmost secrets of the conspirators were being obtained.

Georgiana had not forgotten Beerman's threat, nor the cold, cruel expression of his countenance,

during a momentary period of ungovernable rage. That which she knew to be most important, was to avoid suspicion falling upon her, at least until Gordon could be rescued. Delay must be managed if for no longer than twenty-four hours. The wireless machinery was still crated and at the station ready to go. Thanks to Beerman she had the name of the vessel, upon which Gordon was being held, and its location.

All evidence of the photo-periscope, and the tell-tale wire, must be, at once, destroyed.

So far as concerned the offices Georgiana and Elizabeth had rented, this was a matter of one-half hour. But the extension of the wire and the tube of the periscope, through the floor above, leading into the caucus chamber and to the top of the quaint old cabinet, presented difficulties. To remove these it would be necessary to enter the room above. There was the key, Georgiana had surreptitiously taken and which had been put to such good advantage. She well knew, however, that the director had planned to hear Leigh's speech from his window above. In all probability he was, even now, in his office. To remove the dictograph, from its snug hiding place inside the radiator, and drop the accusing section of the periscope, through the floor and into the room below, then seal up the opening, would require but

a short time. Were it not for the director's presence, this might be easily done. Time was passing. Georgiana's mind was rapidly at work.

"Do you understand the operation and control of elevators?" she asked of the mechanic, who replied affirmatively.

"Could you manipulate the one in this building so as to tie it up for a few minutes,—long enough to—"

"Easily," the mechanic interrupted, at once discerning Georgiana's purpose.

"Immediately the switch is closed, the lift stops,—wherever it may be."

His confident answer decided her. If it could be so managed, Beerman must be drawn from his room and detained for a short while. If anyone could succeed in doing this, she was that one.

It was agreed, between them, that the mechanic should go to the roof of the building, and, upon a given signal from Elizabeth, throw off the switch. This done he would hasten to the director's office, to which Elizabeth now possessed the stolen key, and quickly remove all trace of their operations. This accomplished, he would return to the roof and release the lift.

A minute later the director's telephone was ringing.

"Hello! Hello!" said a tremulous voice, Beerman at once recognized.

"O, I am so glad you are there!" the voice exclaimed, when the director had answered her call. "I carelessly left my purse in the car and am heart-sick over it. Where did you leave it,—I mean, of course, the car?"

"Parked, around on the next block," Beerman replied gently. "Where are you?"

"In my office—just on the next floor."

"Anyone with you?" Beerman's voice was but a whisper.

"Yes, my sister." The director imagined he could detect a touch of regret.

"But I will meet you as the lift stops at our landing," she hastened to add. My sister will remain here while I go down to the car with you."

This decided him. She met him, as agreed, and they were soon descending, when, between the second and third floors, the lift, with a sudden jerk, stopped.

"Oh!" cried Georgiana, in a frightened voice. "Is it going to fall?" She shuddered as, clutching the arm of the director, she looked appealingly to the operator.

"Oh, what is the matter? What—?"

"Don't be frightened, dear," encouraged the man at her side. "It is nothing."

He took her hands as though to quiet her. Trembling little hands they were. Her big, wide open eyes were fastened upon the lever which refused, obstinately, to respond to the efforts of the driver.

Georgiana seemed as if in a dream, quite unable to understand the happenings about her. Beerman had the same deliberation of movement, the same suave yet commanding bearing that usually characterized him, as he demanded of the operator,—

"What's the trouble? Can't you let the thing down?"

"Don't you see that's what I am trying to do?" the operator impatiently replied.

When it seemed they were hopelessly suspended in mid-air, the girl burst into tears. The director, for the moment forgetting everything else, tried to reassure her. Now, she was growing hysterical, refusing to be comforted, and he more and more distressed. At length, by a supreme effort, she controlled herself, seemingly content to lean against the grating facing the brick wall. Could anyone have seen her face, its every muscle rigid with suppressed amusement, her shoulders quivering, her carefully disguised enjoyment would have been diffi-

cult to harmonize with the outward evidence of her extreme nervous fright.

To the operator's continued effort, the lever at length responded. The cage, first jerkily, then evenly, began to descend. The delay had consumed several minutes,—time enough. There was nothing, now, for Georgiana to do but go with Beerman to the car. She knew, it seemed, just where she had left the purse. Stepping to the side of the car opposite the one he had taken, she opened the door. Triumphantly, she held the purse up to view.

"Oh, I am so obliged to you," Georgiana exclaimed, earnestly. He never knew how tactfully she was expressing her feelings. A few moments later they parted.

"Good night, little girl," he said, as he took the lift. "I will be waiting for you tomorrow evening."

"Be sure and do so," she begged, her meaning once more known only to herself.

Could the director have foreseen where she would be twenty-four hours later, and how engaged, his heart would have been beating differently, prompted by impulses not quite so pleasing to his vanity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Meeting of Georgiana and Leigh. A promise of secrecy. The ride on the train. "So this is Georgiana!" "Gyp and I will do the rest." "Gyp" was the dog.

THE train had been thundering along. Leigh, who had embarked upon this strange journey, not without some misgivings, was beginning to reflect. What if the conspirators, intending his undoing, had conceived this plan of drawing him into a snare. Knowing his friendship for Gordon, what could have been more natural, had they ulterior designs, than for them to have thus appealed to his loyalty. After the incidents of the evening just passed, the conspirators were doubtless desperate; could a safe opportunity be had, they would not hesitate to strike. Yet, somehow, there had been in the voice and words of the unknown who had phoned him, a ring of convincing truth. At any rate, the appeal had come from a woman who had spoken of the secret information some one had been obtaining for them. Her trembling earnestness, when she had declared that Gordon

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would not hesitate to confide in her, had, at the time, determined him. As he reviewed the incident, doubt gave way to confident assurance. The unknown had begged him to take the train; he was now waiting further developments.

At the first stop one passenger, a young woman, entered the car. Without hesitation, though there were few passengers and many intervening vacant chairs, she made her way direct to the seat immediately in the rear of the one occupied by Leigh. Feigning to lift her small handbag to the rack above, she managed to let it fall, striking his shoulder.

"Pardon me, please!" she exclaimed.

"Very cleverly done," Leigh complimented her, smiling. "How did you manage? Have any trouble?" Courteously he lifted the bag to a place of safety as the twinkle in his eyes betrayed his amusement.

Leigh's prompt recognition of the young woman as the person who was to meet him, did not disturb Georgiana. Upon one or two occasions she had seen him, and knew who he was. For her there was nothing to fear.

"None whatever," she replied. Her voice was low and could be heard only by the man beside her.

"But how did you know that I was the right person?"

"You are quite too nervous not to have had, very

recently, some exciting experience," was his careless reply. "I am correct, am I not?"

"Perfectly so. I feel relieved now. I knew you, of course, at once. In a short while I will talk with you. Then, when you've given me a certain promise, I will explain. I've something interesting to tell, you may be sure. Something interesting for us to do," she added with emphasis.

"I'm sure of it," Leigh replied quickly, and his manner encouraged her. As for the promise, I give it now. In advance, I agree to keep it."

"Thank you, Mr. Leigh," Georgiana said, gratefully. "As John Gordon's friend, I know you will be true to two women who—love him dearly."

For the moment, unable to mask his surprise, Leigh looked into the eyes of the other, questioningly. He and Gordon were close, confidential friends and he knew of no one, that is of no girl in the West, for whom Gordon held more than passing regard. Leigh's brow was beginning to be knitted.

"One of whom, Mr. Leigh, is his sister!"

Georgiana had noticed his questioning look and felt it her duty to relieve him.

"And you—?" Somehow he seemed to divine that this girl was not the sister. "May I ask—"

"I am his friend," she answered, simply. "But,

after a while we will talk over everything." Then, thinking to relieve his suspense,—

"We two, aided by a man who is now on the train, an expert mechanician, are on the way to the point where they're holding John Gordon and we're going to save him." She was speaking with a confidence that was contagious. Leigh found himself believing in her completely.

During the ride she told him all, not failing to mention that she had brought with her, the St. Bernard dog. For the sake of appearances, Elizabeth had, with difficulty, been persuaded to remain in charge of the offices. From these all except paraphernalia necessary to a "School of Expression" had been removed. Wireless apparatus was in the express car of the train they were on. With this she hoped, with the assistance of the mechanician, to communicate with Gordon. As a careful watch was being kept, and no boats permitted to approach, there was but one way to save him. One arm fractured, the other imprisoned to his waist, he would be unable to swim. However, he might hear and understand a message and, possibly,—answer it.

"If he can't swim and no boats are permitted to approach," Leigh inquired, doubtfully, "how can we hope to save him?"

"Gyp and I will do the rest," she assured him. Gyp was the dog.

Leigh, surprised that it should be so, yet thinking Georgiana had spoken jestingly, looked quickly up. In the expression of the girl's face he found nothing but fixed determination.

"Where do I come in?" he asked, somewhat disappointedly.

"Everywhere," she exclaimed emphatically. "Without you we could accomplish nothing. We would not dare to attempt anything. The wireless message must be sent in your name. John Gordon must be made to believe that it is you who will be there to receive him. Besides, with your protection, we can quickly prepare everything. Without you, one woman, aided by a man and a dog, might, and would incur delay and probably disaster."

"But why could we not have charged the conspirators with his abduction?" asked Leigh, somewhat calmed. "Why not do so now and demand Gordon's release? Had you thought of this plan?"

"Mr. Leigh." Into Georgiana's eyes had come a frightened, appealing look. "Did Beerman and his friends even suspect the truth, their wireless would be used at once. You know what that means. All trace of Gordon would be, forever, destroyed. You need not be told of the influence of those men over

the courts. They do not fear conviction for committing the crime; they dread only the effect it might have upon public opinion."

As Leigh sat, listening, he was thinking of the perspicacity of this woman's mind; of her complete self-mastery in a trying situation; of her courage to face danger that would appall most men.

In a way, he knew of Gordon's devotion to Georgiana. Not that it had ever been confided to him, but, through things that often speak with more emphasis and certainty than words. Upon one occasion, coming unannounced into Gordon's room, he had found him completely unstrung. Before him, on the writing table, lay a freshly opened letter, the stationery monogrammed. His eyes were riveted upon a photograph held in one hand, while upon his lap nestled a small riding-whip, to the handle of which had been tied a bow of velvet ribbon. Upon Leigh's entrance, Gordon had hastily put them away, but had found it difficult to repress the thoughts uppermost in his mind.

"What," asked Leigh, as Georgiana had finished telling him of the certainty of disaster to Gordon, should the conspirators suspect that his whereabouts were known to others, "What if your plan of rescue fails? Have you considered that contingency?"

"Yes," Mr. Leigh, "I have thought of it, and

seriously. In such event, I will have reached the end of my resources, and you will begin with yours."

The mere thought of failure depressed her, and for a moment she was silent. Leigh, meanwhile, waited for the reaction he was sure would follow.

"But we must not think of failure," cried Georgiana, her confident courage asserting itself. As she looked up into the strong face of the man by her side, her determination challenged all obstacles."

"With your help there can be but one result," she declared. "We shall win."

Still there was a chance of failure,—a strong one. To this they could not close their eyes, and talked of alternatives. A wireless order for Gordon's release might be forged. But they had no copy of the private code. To get this, however, was out of the question. In any other form a message would not only be useless, but would surely alarm Gordon's captors. Precautionary measures would be taken and hope destroyed. The organization, opposed to the rule of invisible government, was now co-extensive with the State. Leigh could doubtless gather a few determined men and board the vessel. But there was the order to permit no one to approach. An offensive movement, before it could succeed, might precipitate drastic measures upon the part of Gordon's captors. As a last resort, it was decided that Leigh should

enlist a few friends, and, if necessary, take the vessel by force.

With fine discretion, Georgiana had not spoken of the promise to be exacted from Leigh. Their plans agreed upon, Leigh, who had not forgotten, was waiting for her to speak. Her eyes fixed upon the passing landscape, pictured in the floating mists of the early morning, Georgiana had lapsed into deep study. Her mind, he knew, was not upon the changing scenes before her. The whole force of her strong will, strained almost to the point of breaking, she was struggling with a problem, difficult, indeed, to solve. Her eyes, but a few moments ago strong and determined, now were moist, their expression changing with alternating emotions of fear and tenderness. Leigh at length broke the stillness.

“So this is Georgiana!”

In the presence of her distress, he could remain no longer quiet. Called to herself, with ill-concealed embarrassment, she quickly brushed away the tears.

“Yes! This—is—Georgiana,” she confessed, without the least misgiving. She did not question how he knew. “No one else must know—that Elizabeth and I are here. I am now asking you, Mr. Leigh, to keep our secret. Jack would not have approved, we knew, yet we were determined to help. Men,—even men like him,—and you,—”she hastily added, “are

fixed in the opinion that women are such helpless creatures; that they are to be governed though denied any voice in determining, or administering, the laws to which they are expected, without protest, to submit. Many of us feel differently. Two of us are proving to you, even in this big western country, that women can do more than merely mend clothes."

She was leaning forward, her face in a glow of eagerness. Leigh nodded approval.

"You are certainly doing your share," he complimented her. "Do I understand you to mean that, in all this most excellent work you have done and are doing, with its splendid heroism and self-sacrifice, you wish to hide your identity? Why should you?"

"You may call it a whim if you like, Mr. Leigh," she replied, her voice touched with pleading, "one possible to none but a woman. Still I would not have Jack know of it for the world,—at least not now."

"Some day it may be discovered by him," she continued, "but I am under the impression now that he would not sanction it." Her eyes once more were dreamily seeking the window,—

"I have another and more personal reason," she added.

The situation for Leigh was not without its difficulties. To keep his pledge, given in advance, to her, involved deception toward his friend. Since the first

day of their acquaintance, he and John Gordon had been on terms of frank, complete confidence. Upon the other hand, he was in possession of a secret,—a woman's secret, which would not have been entrusted to him, but for her faith in him. That her plan of rescue may have been prompted, more or less, by romantic impulses, had not escaped him. Even so, this did not, in the least, lessen his obligation. That so far, she had proceeded with unusually fine discretion was not to be denied. Neither could he doubt her courageous devotion. To him there seemed but one course to pursue. He would follow her initiative until, did the circumstances arise, some other plan, involving less risk for her and greater assurance for Gordon, presented itself. Then, he promised himself he would, without hesitation, do that which would, to him, appear as his duty. Come to this conclusion, exhausted with the strain of an arduous campaign, he closed his eyes. Georgiana, to whose weary eyelids sleep would not come, looked into the gray of the morning. Thus they come to the stretch of low lands stretching back from the sea. Once, the girl, seeing herself unobserved, gave herself unreservedly to the thoughts which besieged her. In the still quiet of the early morning she gave way to her troubled uneasiness of mind in a flood of unrestrained tears.

CHAPTER XIX.

Night on the coast. The wireless call,—“The Valley of the Ohio!”

NIGHT had fallen upon the coast. The wind had quieted earlier than usual. The long waves, here and there but slightly fringed with white, came gliding in with slow, regular motion, finally breaking upon the sandy beach. Save a few floating clouds, silver-edged, the sky was clear. The patches of marsh, salt-coated, reflected the moonlight in sparkling jets as if set with millions of diamonds. In the back-ground, the village had fallen early to sleep. Out upon the water the steamer, its smokeless funnels and wireless tower outlined against the horizon, rode to its anchor, slightly nodding. At intervals, as though in easy acknowledgment of the homage of the sea, the vessel bowed, gracefully.

On shore, in the little shipyard, during the day just closed, might have been noticed signs of unusual industry. The tall spars of the two fishing boats, undergoing repairs, had been reared high into the air. From these had been strung strands of wire leading one to the other. In the cabin of the larger

boat had been placed an instrument, unusual to vessels of that character. To the uninitiated its intricate and complicated mechanism would have caused wonder. From this strangely constructed instrument wires of copper extended to those stretched from the spars. All day, an electrician had been busily engaged adjusting its several parts. The evening twilight come, carpenters and laborers, finished their day's work, had gone. Left to himself, the electrician began a series of tests. These responded with strange sputtering noises. Satisfied with his experiments, his face weathered in smiles, he strode to the warehouse, close by, first securely locking the cabin door.

In the office of the warehouse, Leigh, an expression of anxiety upon his face, his brow deeply knitted, stood looking through the window out upon the sea. His mind alternated with hope and doubt. Since their arrival that morning, Leigh had come to realize how desperate was the game they were playing, and had prepared for any eventuality. Careful consideration of Georgiana's plan, left no doubt in his mind that, could it be carried out successfully, the risk, so far as it concerned Gordon, would be less than might attend any other course. For Georgiana, however, the risk would be greater. To Leigh, always ready to shield women, this, alone, was suffi-

cient reason that some other plan should be adopted. Gordon, he knew, would have strenuously opposed a plan involving danger, in the slightest degree even, to Georgiana.

This he had mentioned, thinking to influence her, but Georgiana, firmly resolved, insisted that she would succeed. Nevertheless, he had made preparations. By nightfall several fishing boats, manned by friends he had quietly called together would be at the wharf heavily armed and ready. He would keep his promise. Georgiana should follow her plan. He, too, would be prepared,—to protect Georgiana or Gordon,—or both. Once Gordon was off the vessel, his jailors would scarce risk a combat with a hundred determined men.

Georgiana was cool, courageous, unafraid. Leigh, who knew how severe had been the strain of the past few days, had persuaded her to seek a few hour's rest. During forty-eight hours she had not slept and he was fearful for her strength. Georgiana, confident of her strength and prowess, eagerly longed for the coming of night. The hours dragged by, ages long.

"Gyp!"

The faithful dog ran to his mistress lifting his intelligent eyes.

"Gyp! You and I must save him tonight, Gyp,"

she told him, calling him by name as she stroked the soft, velvety paw he had raised to her lap. "If you love your mistress, doggie, and I am sure that you do, you must prove it tonight. I can't tell you what he represents to me; you could not understand, but I owe him more than either you or I could pay."

Leigh, who had been quietly watching the scene, seeing Georgiana's emotion, began to understand as, until now, he had been unable to do. The delicately curved chin of the girl was trembling, slightly, the big brown eyes moist. Still there was no sign of fear. Listening to the words of the girl, her voice low, appealing, yet touched with so much confidence, his eyes lighted with an expression that reflected his vanishing misgivings of the plan Georgiana had arranged. He was becoming charged with the very atmosphere of her assurance. Furthermore he was beginning to understand the full meaning of the girl's words, while on the train, when she told him "Gyp and I will do the rest,"—was even looking upon the dog as one of the principal actors in whatever experiences the evening would bring.

"Still," he said to himself, "I shall take no chances beyond whatever may prove wise and safe."

Just then the clock in the old village church struck the hour of nine. Gathering the two life preservers, Georgian handed them to Gyp. She knew he

would be ready with them when needed. A few minutes later, in the cabin of the fishing boat, seated before the strange instrument installed by the electrician, she was working the wireless, calling slowly:

"The Valley of the Ohio!—The Valley of the Ohio!" At intervals she would add the signature—"Leigh."

The moments were tense. Crowded in the cabin of the old boat, nerves on edge, the anxious friends waited longingly for some answering signal. One thing they most feared was, that, as they were using the standard code, the name "Leigh" might attract attention of Beerman's men aboard the vessel and excite suspicion. This, however, could not be helped. In the cabin of the old boat the cracking, sputtering instrument winged its eager wireless cry:—

"The Valley of the Ohio! The Valley of the Ohio!"

It pierced the unmeasured space in every direction. The little group, gathered close, their eyes fixed upon the receiver. Somehow they expected, should the answer come, to see it,—visualized before them. Minutes seemed hours. Leigh, his lips drawn tight, was thinking of his men, out there close to the wharf, armed and ready. Should no answer come he had decided. The electrician, with a feeling of ownership of the instrument he had so feverishly installed,

looked up at the wires above with resentful anger. Georgiana, her despair increasing, was growing weak.

Then came the answer. Slowly, hesitantly, the receiver ticked off the characters, the electrician reading them aloud.

“Yes—the—Valley.”

Now that the answer had come, Georgiana sat for a moment bewildered. Her fingers, responding to that which was uppermost in her heart, automatically worked the keys and into the winds shot back the message:

“Thank God, dear!”

The electrician, quick to see the danger of possible disaster to follow any further outburst of emotion upon the part of Georgiana, quickly and skillfully grounded the electric current, and would have possessed himself of the key. A less experienced man might have been caught off his guard. Upon the instant, however, the girl had recovered her self-control. Restoring the current she was now calmly sending the command,—

“Fall overboard,—this side—promptly ten o’clock,
—Don’t fail,—Leigh.”

The command had scarcely left the key when the answer, now clear and quick, came back,—

“Arm broken—helpless—verify Leigh.”

He was doubtful of who might be calling and demanded proof. Whatever misgivings he may have had were quickly dispelled by the answer to his demand. Leigh, who had been silently listening, waiting for the characters to be interpreted, all at once interposed. Georgiana, never hesitating, with no reluctant doubt, her eyes shining with a quick understanding of the situation, looked up expectantly. For one short moment Leigh seemed to be searching his mind. Then he smiled faintly, a confident smile he could not suppress even under the trying circumstances. In a tone quiet, confident, he directed the message,—

“We know your helplessness—are prepared—In name of riding whip—and velvet ribbon—do not hesitate.”

“All right—be ready—ten prompt.” Came the answer, quick and sharp.

It was only when Leigh spoke of the riding whip and velvet ribbon, that Georgiana looked up inquiringly.

It was now but a short half hour until ten and no time to be lost. In one instant Georgiana had thrown

off her cloak. Grasping one of the life preservers, leaving the other to Gyp, she ran to the sea. The dog close to her side, she plunged bravely into the waves and headed direct for the ship.

Leigh made ready his little army of friends. Though Georgiana knew it not, one small boat, sea colored, kept within easy call, as, silently, it rode the waves.

CHAPTER XX.

What became of John Gordon. The ship "Invisible State." An interesting interview. The call and answer.

JOHN Gordon, after a strenuous evening upon the platform, had gone to his hotel. The note of warning so quietly placed in his hands by the unknown, had been read before he had gone to his room. The threat to "remove" him, because somewhat indefinite, awakened no serious uneasiness. In the campaign, several attempts at intimidation had been made. He was inclined to believe this one to be but another move in the desperate game of bluff. Not that he doubted the sincerity of the messenger who had so kindly warned him. Of the threat he was certain. He doubted, only, any real, earnest intent to carry it out. He was yet to learn how swift and sure the decrees of invisible power, when once decided upon, are executed.

What happened during the night,—after he had fallen asleep, he could not recollect. There was a vague remembrance of some one having come into the room; of his springing from the bed. Then a

sharp paralyzing pain in the forearm followed, instantly, by a feeling that a tremendous weight had fallen upon his head,—then a rumbling sound he could not understand, as, in great waves, now rising, now falling, everything about him seemed drifting into the distance.

How long he had been unconscious he had no way of knowing. Mind is so constituted that to reach definite, tangible understandings, there must be complete and concrete, impressions. As, in his delirium, he struggled to catch the waves of floating colors all about him, it seemed that his arm, gripped in the clutch of some powerful hand, refused to obey the summons of his brain. Now, at terrific, dizzy speed, he was flying through space. At intervals, sudden, jarring motions sent flashes of fire shooting through his arm and shoulder, then a long silence.

In his semi-wakeful moments he would try to arise, only to find some resistless force holding him back. In a vague sort of way he would realize that he was not alone; that he was in a closed car, and that the man at the wheel was driving at a terrific speed. With momentary return of mental activities, the pain would become excruciating. Once only had the car halted. In a dull, dreamy way he knew that some one was pulling, working his injured arm. Then

he would float away, again, into the silence of unconsciousness.

Upon his awakened mind, the first impression was the peculiar smell of the sea. His eyes, now opened wide, began to picture his surroundings,—contrasting them with the night before—when he had retired to bed. For awhile he lay, his confused mind trying to fathom this strange mystery. Soon came threads of memory; the uninvited presence of men in his room; the paralyzed arm,—the heavy, crushing, weight upon his head,—then the sensation of drifting into space.

He was not in the room of the hotel! The truth flashed upon him,—that he was on board a vessel. How he came to be there he could not understand. In a dull sort of way he recalled the rapid flight,—in the closed car,—the short period when it had been halted; the piercing pains in his arm and shoulder. Instinctively his left hand sought the wounded arm and shoulder. No longer did he wonder at his strange surroundings. He had been assaulted and had been unconscious. Just in the act of springing from his narrow berth,—

“Keep quiet, please,” said a voice, commanding though not unkind. “You’ve been rather roughly handled. I’m sorry, but, aside from a wrenched shoulder and broken fore-arm, you’re all right.”

"Where are we?" demanded Gordon. "What does all this mean?"

There was no use in attempting physical resistance in what he now knew, was captivity. There was no way of solving the problem that confronted him, until he could learn the facts leading up to it.

"To be frank with you," replied the voice, "we're aboard our cutter, the 'Invisible State.' We've brought you here for a purpose."

Beerman, for it was he, stood, leaning over Gordon.

"I've need of a little conversation with you,—a proposition to offer." Gordon made no comment.

"You're tired and weak, now. What I have to say is of vital importance. Suppose you rest for an hour. Then we'll talk freely," proposed Beerman with a feigned tone of kindness.

"Just as you please," indifferently retorted the injured man.

While Beerman had been speaking, Gordon had reasoned, that, if it had been their intention to destroy him they would have accomplished their purpose. Whatever the outcome, the immediate prospect was one of negotiation. In a battle of wits, with time and opportunity for reflection, there was nothing for him to lose through delay. He knew at whose instance he had been assaulted,—and abducted. Beerman's presence explained that,—and

why. He knew, also, that the secrets of the conspirators had been leaking; that he and Leigh had been exposing them. Who might be responsible for the leakage he did not know. As was believed by Beerman, he was of the opinion that, for reasons best known to himself, some one, affiliated with the organized "invisible government," was betraying its secrets. It is not unusual, with organizations, naturally despotic, that there develops some one whose scruples rebel at methods growing, more and more, corrupt and unscrupulous, as the vanity and greed of power progresses.

The fractured arm was to Gordon's disadvantage. Could he prolong negotiations, each day would not only add to his own chances, but might increase the opportunities of his friends. That they were vigilant he could not doubt,—especially Leigh. Of Georgiana's operations he knew nothing. He knew that Leigh would speak that night,—before the building in which the conspirators conceived and directed their plans. Had he known of the screen,—that, as Leigh would be speaking, the films, mercilessly exposing the corruption and interlocking devices of invisible government, would be thrown upon the canvas,—indisputable proof of the betrayal of the people,—he would have known that there would be but small time for negotiation.

One hour had passed when the director returned. About him there was nothing to indicate either uneasiness of mind or fear of consequences. His perfectly easy manner and pleasing voice spoke of confident assurance. If he could capitalize the energies and influence of this man, his power over the people would, to some extent be increased. In the same degree, the opposition would be weakened and discouraged. Still, it was but a matter of degree. In any event, the mastery of his organization would continue. It were best, however, to strengthen its power,—whenever possible.

How the interview would have fared, how it might have ended,—could these two men have read each other's hearts, need hardly be conjectured. Little suspecting, even the other's knowledge of her existence, each was in love with the same woman. To the mind of each, during the conversation to follow, this woman would be visualized; thoughts of her be wedged between the links of their conversation.

"Mr. Gordon," began Beerman, when seated. "You and I are men of affairs,—neither of us given to circumlocution. You are engaged along one line of activity,—I in another. My business, to exist, depends upon controlling the State. As this is true we have proceeded to control it. We intend to continue to do so, regardless of opposition, or complaint. Upon

the platform you have, repeatedly, charged that we buy up certificates of registration; that, like so many sheep, we vote the illiterates and irresponsibles, and by that system, disfranchise the intelligent people of the State. You have charged, also, that the best of our citizenship are thus ruled by the worst; that all are mere subjects of our "invisible government," as you have characterized it. Your charges, Mr. Gordon, are all true. We are doing the things you charge us with doing, all right, and a lot more. It costs a pile of money, yet we profit by it."

"You agree that I speak frankly, do you not?" The director was looking keenly into the eyes of his listener.

"Yes! not only frankly but truthfully," said Gordon, with spirit.

"So far, then, we are agreed," said Beerman, as though the subject were, for the present, clinched.

"Still," he continued, "we cannot close our eyes to the fact that public opinion is growing, more and more, against both us and our business. For years it was easy to manage. We simply bought up the irresponsibles. Now we find it necessary to enlist the services, often secretly, of certain men. Through the control of elections, we dictate the election of certain public officers. By the same means, we manage to have enough friends in the Legislature. In

this way, aided by certain politicians who have influence with, and often control the election of, members, we manage to protect our business. All this involves expense, I admit, but what does a few hundred thousand dollars, now and then, amount to when millions, nearly all profit, are at stake?"

"Besides,"—Beerman added, a shrewd, cunning smile spreading over his face as, from the corner of his eyes, he looked at Gordon. "We know how and where to recoup our expenditures. You dear people pay it back—after all."

Gordon was listening, attentively. As he offered no comment, Beerman proceeded:—

"We've got a lot of fellows, hired by the State, chasing all over the country. Some of them are bright enough; others couldn't tell a corn stalk from a rose bush. The fool people think these men are working for them,—haven't sense enough to notice that no one gets a job unless he's for us, first, last and all the time. We've created a lot of jobs with fat salaries. Don't know just what for, but the fellows who get the places sure mix with the dear people and make medicine at State conventions."

Beerman had thrown himself back in his chair and was laughing heartily.

"Mr. Gordon!" he said, mockingly, "the dear people you are trying to save from our machine, haven't

any sense. We shove the tax rate up to the limit on 'em. They kick for awhile. We come back at 'em; tell them to go somewhere—Jericho maybe. Then we appropriate the whole works. Taxes boom again. They'll kick again,—but,—we'll have some way to fool em,—just—the—same. That's the way it goes. The way to hold the boys from the forks of the creek is to place your right arm gently around their shoulders and, while you've got 'em, shove a stiletto under their fifth rib, and,—into their bale of cotton."

"Why," he continued, enthusiastically, "one little innocent looking law we passed a few years ago, gives a bunch of our friends the chance to skin your fool farmers out of a million, or so, each year."

"You should have seen, and heard, them,—in their country school houses,—clamoring for it. Of course," he added, with a broad grin, "we got up the meetings and were careful, always, to have one of our men present. He wrote the telegrams to the Legislators,—demanding the enactment of our law. They haven't woke up yet."

"Imagine them!" and Beerman leaned back, convulsed, once more, with laughter. "Imagine them, Mr. Gordon, demanding their own crucifixion. Why, if a certain showman, who declared that the people love to be humbugged, were living and would get in

the game of politics, he could have anything he desired."

"Still," he added, musingly, "we know the game fairly well,—ourselves."

As Beerman was, so contemptuously, speaking of a class of citizens, who, though they are the backbone of the country, are too often the prey of conscienceless politicians, Gordon's face had flushed, hotly. Still he could not deny Beerman's statements. Experience had proven that this man was telling only the truth.

Beerman had been unusually frank. In this way he hoped to discourage any further effort upon the part of Gordon in behalf of the people. Should he fail in this,—well, this man was helplessly in his power.

"It has reached the point, now," Beerman continued, his voice now become serious, "that we are the common prey of political malefactors on both sides of the question that involves our business. Certain men, supposed to be lined up on your side, join with others who profess to be on our side, in building what they are pleased to call 'fires' under our industry. Unless we meet their demands they threaten to combine against us. In plain words we keep them on the pay roll."

"What do these fellows do in return?" Gordon's tone was one more of demand than a query.

"Why, you always notice, don't you, that when we've got to have 'em we get them. Sometimes, to control elections, and even conventions, it becomes necessary to divide our opponents."

At this point, Beerman, his face distorted with a look of unutterable contempt, leaned toward his listener,—

"And you haven't failed to observe, have you?" he asked, insinuatingly, "that among your friends, we always show up with a 'great divisor,' or two, to work with and save us, have you?"

The question had the finality of an emphatic assertion.

Gordon's face had become flushed. Not that he believed, for a moment, there was, in the words of the director, any purpose to insult him. His face colored because he had reason to believe that Beerman's statements were true. In every election,—in every convention,—and, sometimes in the legislature,—the ranks of the "invisible power" had stood, solidly, unbroken while those of their opponents would be thinned by absentees, dissensions, or actual desertions.

With the ghastly truth brought to him,—face to face,—how could he help revealing his shame? Not

alone for his own self-respect, but for the trustful people who, at the very least, were entitled to fidelity upon the part of their chosen spokesmen and leaders.

Beerman, seeing the effect his words had produced upon the man, stretched upon the bed, was encouraged to proceed.

"Mr. Gordon," he continued, in deliberate, persuasive manner, "Upon more than one occasion, you have been given to understand that it would be to your interest to come over to us. In each case you have declined all overtures. To be frank, once more, your opponents respect you for it, more, even, than do your own crowd. With us, you could advance, financially and politically. Will you permit a question,—right here?"

"Certainly, Mr. Beerman," replied Gordon, "you may ask it, if you wish."

"Do you believe there is any future for you, politically, or financially, I mean to come from your own crowd?"

"Now, I shall be just as frank with you, Mr. Beerman," replied Gordon, promptly, and emphatically,—"Financially, the work I am doing for the people, trying to free them from the control of your 'invisible government' and restore to them their rights of actual citizenship, is being done at my own ex-

pense, in time and money. As concerns political office, I neither desire nor expect it. The responsibilities that rest upon the private citizen are no less binding than are those that are reposed in the public servant. Government, after all, is good or bad, according to whether or not the people have courage to control it. Certainly if they are so craven as to permit their government to be usurped, they will always find that there are selfish interests, ready to enslave them."

Beerman, for a long while, sat, silent. Then, as if decided,—

"I know that what you have said is true. We all know it. Should you, or any other man, seriously opposed to us, offer for a certain high, public office, you will find the most serious opposition from certain of your own leaders.

"That being true," cried Gordon, his voice full of determination, "the thing of greatest importance to us and the entire State is to have a thorough laundering of our own party and drive the Iscariots into the ranks of your crowd, where they get their thirty pieces of silver."

"Not much!" came the quick, emphatic reply, as Beerman shook his head, negatively. "We have no use for them except where they now are. Collectively, we may be rather tough, but, as has been often,

said, there is a certain kind of honor, even among thieves. We are willing to use those fellows but we positively decline to adopt them."

For several minutes, both were silent. Each was busy with his own reflections. Gordon was thinking deeply. Much of what Beerman had said, was, he was convinced, only too true. His own difficulties had been many, and, at times, discouraging.

There comes a time in the life of every man, when Satan, clothed in the garlands of public praise; of achievement; of success, interpreted by the sum of gold possessed rather than the means employed in getting it; of public support of the things privately condemned; of encouragement along the paths of wrong; of public contempt of poverty,—often the penalty of honesty; of gratitude for those who, through cunning schemes despoil us, and with only ingratitude toward those who suffer to protect us. Yes,—there comes a time when Satan leads us into the high mountain and asks,—"What is it that I may give to thee that thou wilt fall down and worship me?" Neither is it every man who can say: "Get thee behind me!"

The director was now the first to speak. As before, his voice was even and respectful.

"Why can't you come with us?" he asked pointedly. "As to the consideration, I do not hesitate to

say your services would be of great value. We will leave that to you. This holds good equally toward any political ambition you may have. The people all over the State are becoming aroused over this question you have raised of 'Invisible, Spectral, Government.' They realize that, instead of being citizens, as they thought they were, they are nothing but subjects. We need men like you to halt them. Unless we can hold them down as subjects, our business will have to close up shop."

"Of course," he added, "we would expect you to repudiate that propoganda of yours."

"How?" demanded Gordon, looking up sharply.

"It could be done only in one way," replied Beerman, carelessly. "A signed statement from you, to the effect that certain facts had come to your knowledge. That, upon investigation, these proved, in your judgment, that your charges against us were groundless."

Gordon was by this time almost choking with helpless anger. His impulse was to strike, with his uninjured hand, the author of the insulting words, he, in his confined condition, had been compelled to hear. In this game of wits, he was, however, forced to accept the situation. The director had not mentioned his release. He knew, without being told, that his freedom, at the hands of Beerman, depended entirely

upon his acquiescence in the plan the director had outlined. That he would consent never entered Gordon's mind. That he must play for delay, however, was certainly the part of prudence.

"It would be rather embarrassing for me to issue such a statement as you propose, Mr. Beerman," said Gordon, in a tone feigning hesitation. "I don't see how I could do it; in fact couldn't do it."

"Don't say positively,—you will not," advised the director, generously. "Think it over. Of course this is new to you. It is nothing more than fair that you should have time to think it over; to weigh the situation carefully."

Beerman's words were pregnant with meaning. Nor had Gordon failed to understand that, unless he agreed to accept the proposition, just submitted, his captivity might last indefinitely.

After asking to be advised of his decision at the earliest convenience, Berman departed. Before going he directed that Gordon be treated considerately. That, in case he felt so disposed, he could communicate with the director by wireless. The operator, on board the vessel, had the code and could be had at any moment. All Gordon would have to do would be to direct to him the message he cared to send.

At mention of the wireless, Gordon, though feigning indifference, became alert. If it could be man-

aged he might use this means of attracting attention.

That night he lay, for a long while, in sober reflection. His conversation with Beerman had not, in the least discouraged him. He had known, in a way, there were those in his party, secretly in sympathy with the designs of the invisible government. Others had professed disapproval of Beerman and his methods and become affiliated with the party of the people for the sole purpose of espionage and treason. A list of the names of these fellows had recently been handed him. It was now in the hands of a few trusted friends. That which Beerman had told him only confirmed the opinion that the time had come to denounce them. The proof, now in his possession, was final and convincing. All along he had observed, that the masses of the people, fighting bravely in the ranks, were sincere and true. He could not restrain a feeling of repulsive contempt for those who would betray their trust. How could the cause of the people hope to prevail against that of invisible government with its far reaching arm, unless the tribunes of the people remained faithful to the masses.

A decided advantage possessed by the invisible government was that it had, always, money to offer; while the cause of the people had, always, money,—to beg. This advantage was, to the enemy, worth

many, many, thousand votes. Enough and to spare. Could this be neutralized, success would be certain.

"Success in spite of their mobilized illiterates, and distilled dollars!" Gordon exclaimed, speaking to the empty loneliness.

"What is most needed," he said to himself, "is a few men, or women, able and willing to devote themselves to the work of building a lasting monument to patriotism and true philanthropy. The chief source of vice, want and corruption crushed, the grateful hearts of women, grateful for the rescued souls of girls and little children and the salvaged hopes of men, would feed from the spring of revitalized life. Pulsing with the rich blood of redeemed homes, these would raise a shaft of grateful memories, which, planted upon the fair bosom of our State, would reach up into the azure dome of heaven and there among the angels' sparkling eyes, sing songs of gladness at the foot of the Redeemer's throne."

"Why not save such as these, who would perish, before the fire of greed has burned their souls into everlasting shame?" he demanded. He was looking accusingly through the window, beyond which lay the green fields and pastures of his adopted State.

"Why not tear down a ruthless industry, powerful

enough through its political and immoral alignments, to break down and corrupt, and rear, in its place, a brotherhood strong enough to lift up and refine? Why not shield rather than punish? Why not save the unwary from the need of rescue homes, asylums and prison camps? Then, and not 'till then, we may look over a field, rich in the harvest of achievement, surpassing all history. Then the children of men and women, their faces turned from the slums, where once they writhed, first in hunger,—then in shame,—will look eagerly toward the schoolhouse and intellectual, useful life."

"Why should there be children of the slums in a land of God and plenty, such as is this wonderful State of ours?" he demanded of the stillness, broken at intervals by the soft wash of the sea. "Why permit the greed of men, drunk with malted gold, to strip the homes of other men of bread,—and hope? Why foster want and crime?"

"We,—all men and women, know the means,—the distilled and malted power,—by which vice rules! Why not face them, upon an equal field, with clean, untarnished gold and the cleaner souls of men? Vice would be blinded with the glare of truth!"

"O, what glorious conquerors would be they whose lances, tipped with human sympathy, had split the rock and cleared the way, that, 'Man's inhumanity

to man' might no more,—'make countless thousands mourn' in this fair State of ours!'

Watching for an opportunity to send a call for help, Gordon, for several evenings had been strolling upon the deck. In doing so, he would pass, to and fro, before the door of the cabin in which had been installed the "wireless." Should the opportunity come he was ready to face the risk. To manipulate the keys would be difficult. His right arm, fractured, was useless. The left was strapped to his waist. The captain with many apologies, had explained to him that, while not advised as to the reason of his detention, his instruction required that he be carefully guarded. He would be permitted to walk the deck. To forestall any attempt at swimming for the shore, however, one of the crew would be assigned to stroll beside him. "Unless," he added considerately, "Mr. Gordon might prefer to walk alone." In that case, it would become necessary that the uninjured arm should be strapped to his waist.

Though complaining of such precautionary measures, Gordon was secretly elated. He managed so, that, while the arm was tied, securely, his hand and wrist were free. In this way, nothing else preventing, he could work the wireless. Frequently, the operator would pick up messages intended for other vessels. Upon two or three occasions, Gordon had

stepped into the cabin. Feigning curiosity he asked many questions. In a short while, he became familiar with the location of the keys. He could, if need be, manipulate them in the dark.

The days had been dragging slowly. The evening was still. Gulls and other water fowl filled the air with their strange, harsh melody. The little clock upon the wall of his cabin had struck nine as Gordon sat looking through the window. As the clouds drifted before the moon, he watched the shadows as they glided over the long rolls of the sea. Less than a mile away, showing white in the moonlight, was the village. Moored to the wharf were several small launches and fishing boats. It had not escaped him that no one had been permitted to board "The Invisible State." When boats of any kind had approached he would be conducted to his state room. That he was to be held until he would repudiate the cause for which he had been fighting, there could be no doubt. That he would refuse was certain. What would be the next move? Excepting only that he was restrained of his liberty, he was being shown every courtesy. Present conditions, however, could not be expected to continue long. Having gone so far, they dared not set him free. If he could play for delay long enough for his arm to mend—?

In the little room on the deck immediately above him, the wireless began to call.

It was nothing unusual. Become so accustomed to its frequent ticking sounds, he had almost ceased to remark them. Why was it that **this** call seemed strangely different? Characters, coming slowly and distinct,—as if from a station nearby, or else sent by an instrument of unusual power, fixed his attention. Absorbed as he had been in contemplating his situation, the first part of the call had gone unnoticed. Distinctly, however, he heard the closing words—"the Ohio."

As it was repeated, he caught the complete sentence:

"The Valley of the Ohio! The Valley of the Ohio!"

What could it mean? Who in the West, or out upon the endless waters, could be interested in a summons couched in words so often filling his own thoughts? Only one person could there be,—his friend, Robert Leigh, with whom he had often talked of "the valley." What if it should prove that he——?

It required but a minute for him reach the deck, deserted at this hour by all save the inevitable watchman. He, having notice of the privileges accorded the prisoner, had come to let him pass un-

noted. Others, he knew, were in the saloon, deep in their customary evening pastime.

As he approached the little cabin, he could plainly hear the appealing cry. This time it bore the signature, "Leigh."

Gordon's heart began beating wildly. Here was hope at last. Once more he felt the sense of liberty. Silently, yet swiftly, he made his way to the instrument. His uninjured arm was still fastened to his waist, but, by leaning far over the table his fingers grasped the keys.

"Yes, the Valley," his nervous fingers ticked in answer. Hardly had the last character gone into the air when back came the message,—

"Thank God, dear!"

Even to Gordon's excited mind it appeared strange that Leigh, close friends though they were, should so address him.

Then came the command that he throw himself into the sea. Surely, whoever it might be knew nothing of his helpless condition. What if this were but a scheme to bring about his undoing,—and by his own act? What would be more likely than that his enemies bait him with the signature of his trusted friend?

Of late years, Gordon had learned to be cautious. What they had asked him to do in his helpless state

was weighing heavily upon his exhausted strength of will.

Then it was that he told them of his helplessness and asked for verification. Soon came the answer; with it the incontestable proof. No one else in all the great West knew of his treasures, save Leigh. It was enough. He was now content and ready to confide life itself to the judgment and fidelity of a friend, who had never once failed him since the first hour of their acquaintance.

Closing the door of the little room, Gordon walked leisurely upon the deck. The clock tolled the half hour. From the corners of his eyes, he peered into the distance. The village was sleeping. Several small boats seemed to be gliding slowly from the dock. Gradually the space between these and him lessened. The bark of a dog,—it seemed far out from the shore,—broke the stillness. Listening intently, he heard nothing more. The watchman, worn with the monotony of his lonely vigils, lay outstretched upon the canvas cot,—yawning comfortably.

CHAPTER XXI.

The leap into the sea and the daring rescue.
"Georgiana! Is it true?" Leigh sends a telegram.

GEORGIANA and the faithful Gyp had reached the side of the vessel. Supported by the buoyant belts of cork, both were soon riding the waves. Looking up, Georgiana could see, silhouetted in the skylight, the figure of a man, leaning upon the ship's rail. Far as eyes could pierce, Georgiana could not mistake that figure. A certain sense of pride came to her. To her it was now given to save John Gordon's life even, as once in her girlhood, it was given to him to save her.

Little thought did she give to the danger. Certain, as she was, that since their exposure upon the screen, the conspirators would adopt desperate means to refute the damning evidence, she knew that Gordon's life would be gravely imperiled. Now she trembled. The wireless, might at any moment, flash the order that would make rescue hopeless. Impatiently, she awaited the few remaining moments to pass.

At the first stroke of the old clock in the village, Gordon leaped the rail, striking the water but a few

feet away from his rescuers. Georgiana's eyes were fixed upon him. Almost resistless had been the impulse to call to him,—to tell him to come. As he leaped the rail, her heart, for a moment,—was hushed. He had not hesitated; yet, in mounting the rail, his bandages had caught upon the stanchion. For the fraction of an instant the whole weight of his body hung, suspended from his fractured arm. No outcry came from his lips though the pain was excruciating. Into the water fell, heavily, the body of John Gordon. Over him closed the waves. He arose,—unconscious.

As he struck the water, Gyp, the faithful dog, sprang for him. Together they went down into the depths; together they came to the surface. In some strange sense the intelligent dog seemed to understand. Around the struggling form Georgiana quickly threw the life belt. Drawing Gordon's uninjured arm across her neck she rested his head upon her shoulder. Gyp, not waiting to be told, nosed his head under the fractured arm. Together, Gyp and Georgiana swam towards the shore.

Midway, the boats picked them up. Never doubting Georgiana yet mistrusting fate, Leigh had set out with his band of friends,—ready for any emergency.

On board the "Invisible State" men, in search of

their guest, were now rushing madly, over the deck. The captain was cursing roundly. Boats were lowered only to be quickly recalled. Leigh's little fleet, filled with men armed for conflict, came up. The captain amazed that anyone should dare approach his vessel except by permission of the man he long had served, halted.

"You have two minutes,—not one second longer, to get back aboard your ship!" commanded a voice from the leading boat. Within the allotted time, he, with his men, were aboard.

Upon the silent night the wireless was crackling its warning to the master,—Beerman, who at that moment was impatiently, expectantly, waiting in his touring car, for a woman he had recently come to know,—to keep her engagement, made the evening before, for a long, long ride—in the country.

On Leigh's boat efforts were making to restore Gordon. His head held upon her lap, Georgiana, the sea dripping from her clothes, was seated beside him ministering to his needs. For the time she had forgotten her plan that Gordon was to be kept in the dark. Leigh, with whom she had insisted upon hiding her identity, was wondering what Georgiana would do should Gordon regain consciousness and she be recognized.

Leigh little knew that, while in the water, Geor-

giana had called to Gordon, "Do not leave me,—now!" He little knew that the trying moments had healed her of all vanity of secrecy or self-achievement; little knew how this woman's soul, now flushed with possession, how her very soul had thrilled as she held him,—there in the water his arm about her neck,—or how, when her whole strength was needed to keep them both afloat, Georgiana had been unable to resist and for one brief, blissful moment had pressed her lips to Gordon's, ready to die, and happily,—with and for him.

How could Leigh have known how, when the fight was hardest, she had prayed for strength to win, vowing never to leave him should her prayer be answered. Nor yet to him—Leigh—how her heart went out in praise and thankfulness for his timely coming with the boat to help them in their desperate condition. She had not foreseen Gordon's helpless state and begun to feel the strain keenly.

With head bowed and uncovered, Leigh, keenly apprehensive of Gordon's condition, watched the touching reunion of the two lovers,—the one loved by him as men are seldom loved by their fellowmen; the other already admired for her wondrous womanliness and now to be regarded by Leigh, always with a deep and reverent affection. In the emergency he had thought that a physician's skill might be needed

to resuscitate his friend, but his skilled eye soon detected that John Gordon was in care of the surest and best of physicians,—that the girl bending over him, was in truth an angel of mercy. To Leigh, whose heart was as open as the western firmament and as generous as the plains from which he sprung,—there came yet another vision—that of a little girl—in the lobby of the hotel that night—raining kisses upon his cheek.

“Georgiana! Is it true?” were Gordon’s first audible words.

He had been dreaming,—of the short blissful moments upon the bank of the river—there in the Valley, and had looked up just at the moment when consciousness was drifting across the twilight zone that lies between the mysteries of sleep and the realities of life. His awakening mind recognized and his opening eyes mirrored, a face that had often, since he left the “Valley” and but a moment before, been in his dreams.

“Yes, dear, it is—Georgiana,” she whispered, pressing his head close to her heart.

At the sound of her voice the shadows fell away. Gordon knew it was Georgiana. How she happened to be there his heart did not ask. It was enough that Georgiana was there,—the woman whom he loved,—the one who had been his inspiration throughout the

years of his struggles for the right as he had been given to see the right. Georgiana filled John Gordon's world. Up and around her his uninjured arm was reaching. Into her eyes he gazed with the look of a heart at length come home.

"How I've been longing for this moment!" he whispered. "The years have been long, Georgiana. And you? You've been waiting also, Georgiana?"

"Yes, Jack! waiting,—holding my heart for you."

Leigh had been watching in silence. What they said he was careful not to hear. He felt it a profanation to do so;—even to look upon them was an intrusion. As with most brave men he was susceptible to emotion and for a moment his eyes were moist.

It was when Georgiana was saying to Gordon, "Yes, I've been waiting," that the truth flashed upon him. Six years had passed—since the incident in the hotel lobby. The little girl of six years gone by was now grown to womanhood. Yet Leigh had been, always, fond of associating her with the time, when, as a child, she had not as yet assumed the restraints of mature years.

Faithful to his promise he had journeyed each year to visit her. Of late years he had planned his departure progressively earlier, his stay relatively prolonged. This, he would convince himself, was due to the increasing importance of her studies,

especially in music. During these visits he would accompany her to the conservatory, where each week she would sing to audiences overflowing the great auditorium. It was only on his latest trip that he had suggested that, when the girl had graduated, he would send her to Europe and she had positively refused. Pressed for a reason, she had frankly replied that, should she go so far away he might not manage to visit her so often.

"Would my generous benefactor be content that I should see him less frequently?" she had asked. Her voice but illy concealed the hurt his offer had given.

"No, child!" he had hastened to say. "I would miss you very much,—more than you could know, still I don't want other girls to have—"

"None could have!" she interrupted, the tears starting. Grateful for his kindness, she had lifted her hands to his shoulders, offering her lips.

"No other girl has ever been quite so blessed as I, because no other man has ever been quite so unselfishly generous and good." And he had kissed the tears away, promising never to mention Europe again.

Of late, during moments even when the campaign was most strenuous, he had been thinking. Even now the letter,—her last letter, snugly stowed away in an inside pocket,—was asking "why he was delay-

ing his coming, and begging him to advise if he were ill, that she might come to him. A postscript said she was counting the lonely days.

As in a dream, Georgiana's words were now ringing in Leigh's heart. She had been waiting for Gordon. Could it be possible that——?

"God bless her heart!" burst from his lips.

As was his habit he was speaking his thoughts aloud. Gordon, as yet had not known of Leigh's presence, but recognized his voice. Thinking his words referred to Georgiana, Gordon turned to Leigh approvingly,—

"Yes, God bless her always!" Gordon's weak voice was saying, solemnly. "Come and meet her, my friend. Georgiana, this is Robert Leigh, and my dearest friend, save one."

"She is the bravest little woman in the West!" exclaimed the Westerner.

Gordon, his few conscious moments so completely filled, had not wondered at Georgiana's presence. Not advised of the happenings, leading up to these strange circumstances, he looked up, inquiringly,—surprised that these two were already known to one another.

"Let us tell you all about it after a while, dear," said Georgiana, reassuringly.

The vessel was now moored to the wharf. Geor-

giana had donned her cloak and was discussing with Leigh, plans for the immediate present.

The campaign had ended and the election would be held on the morrow.

Arrived at the hotel, Leigh hastened to the telegraph office. With a few quick strokes of the pen he wrote a message and handed it to the operator, urging him to send it without delay.

And the operator who could understand, although he did not actually know Robert Leigh, smiled as he transmitted the words over the wire,—

“I, too, have been counting the lonely days. Coming by first train,” the message said.

Georgiana and Elizabeth had returned to the “Valley.” Gordon was to follow so soon as certain affairs of business could be arranged. Leigh, released from his promise, had told him all that Georgiana had done to aid them.

Of her acquaintance with Beerman, Georgiana had herself told Gordon, omitting nothing. When, in the recital of her experience, Georgiana told of their imprisonment in the elevator cage, Gordon was visibly amused. As she told him of Beerman’s advances, while driving in the car, her resentment, and of her final success in securing from Beerman the

secret of Gordon's captivity, his eyes, into which at first had come a look of steel, softened.

"The same noble, impetuous Georgiana!" he exclaimed. "Ah," he added, playfully, "But what if you had left a scar on **his** forehead?"

"I'm glad I didn't," said Georgiana. "How could I love **that** one! On **his** brow, it would always have shone a cicatrix of shame."

"And the **other** scar, Georgiana?" he asked.

Reaching up, Georgiana took his head in both her hands. Unseen, unheard, her answer is unrecorded.

There are times when words are inadequate,—when in language fitting to the hour the lips are helpless to respond; when terms designed by human mind fall helpless before the majesty of God-made heart and soul. In all life there is but one such moment. How generous is He in His wealth of soul-language!

EPILOGUE.

Truth just beginning to fight. The Nation's
opportunity and the Country's waste.

THE campaign had passed into history. As the director had so confidently predicted, the forces opposed to invisible government had been divided, and, by a close margin defeated. Still the people were determined. Even now they were preparing to renew the contest. They knew why they had lost. Ashamed, mortified, over the double-dealing of some of those who had professed sympathy for their cause, they were preparing as they had never prepared before. They were fighting for the right and right would win.

Events had been moving rapidly. The Nation was now at war; its resources were being rapidly, masterfully, mobilized. Patriotic men and women, their activities during a long period of peace devoted to individual advancement, were now directing their thoughts and energies to the Nation's safety,— to the country's glory and honor. Party lines were for the time forgotten. Men and women everywhere were volunteering for the country's service. The Nation

was unified. Americans, regardless of and above all other considerations, had, overnight, in the presence of a common enemy, blended into one homogeneous, determined, patriotic people. In the solemn hour of war Americans had not forgotten the ideals of the Nation; they were one and indivisible.

Plans were being carefully, yet rapidly, prepared looking to the expansion of the Nation's agricultural activities, the conservation of natural resources, the increased output of fields, mines, forests and factories. In all sections of the country, great industrial plants were being tendered, unselfishly, for the use of the Nation,—industries of every character save one.

The distilleries, breweries, liquor machines and saloons, having nothing useful to offer,—nothing which could be mobilized for the Nation's defense,—tendered nothing. In peace these but represented a Nation's cancer; in war they could but weaken, disrupt and destroy—the Nation.

In war, as in peace, the surest preparation a Nation may invoke will be found in the mobilized brains and nerves of men and women; brains and nerves unfevered, unburned, unweakened by drink. No matter how perfect the mechanism of the gun, the gunner's aim is untrue when the target is obscure to the trembling, magnifying vision of alcohol. A bullet,

sped through the shadow, will not halt the substance.

More than ever, now, the people opposed to the liquor traffic were determined to free the State of its blighting curse. A great mass meeting was held. Gordon, called to the platform declared that:

"Just as in war armies cannot fight, effectually, under leaders whose strategies are directed in the interest of the enemy, so is it equally and inevitably true that political campaigns cannot be won except under the leadership of men faithful in heart and soul to the principles that inspire the contest itself."

Turning to the beautiful flag of our Nation, so artistically spread above him, Gordon reverently touched its silken folds. His voice low yet distinct, soft yet stern, seemed to draw the great audience closer together,—near to each other and to himself.

"Let me," he begged, solemnly as though seeking permission of the Nation's emblem, "Let me, in this momentous hour of our country's history submit to you a few thoughts worthy of consideration by the American people."

"Upon every hand," he continued, facing his audience, "we witness the work of mobilizing the Nation's wealth of men, money and material, preparing for war. Every man and every woman, also, must be ready, cheerfully and patriotically, to answer,

'yes!' to the Nation's call. In tabulating the Nation's productive wealth we cannot, safely, close our eyes to the Nation's waste.

War, modern war, costs money and everyone should willingly do his bit. Still, if we as a people are wise, the expense may be met without cost in money, to the Nation. The waste, alone, of our country, if economized, can be made to more than finance the war, indefinitely.

Standing high above all other elements of waste is the national drink bill. It exceeds, annually, one thousand million dollars. Not one penny of this huge sum adds to the productive wealth of the country. To the contrary, every particle of it crushes energy, destroys manhood and womanhood, dwarfs childhood. Why not, in the hour of the Nation's need, abolish this waste that taxes so heavily the American people?

To pay the interest upon an initial issue of war bonds, totalling seven billions of dollars, the American people will be called upon to pay annually, two hundred and forty-five millions. The sum seems tremendous but it is for the honor and safety of our country and the glory of our flag. None should protest though there may be those that will complain. Yet, as a people, we are paying one thousand millions each year to sustain the liquor traffic,—not for the

country's good but to sustain the country's vice. Whether in the form of voluntary contributions across the bar, or otherwise, it is gathered from the whole people. Everyone pays his or her bit. If not in one way then in another.

The hundreds of millions of bushels of grain, our annual waste in distilling the country's drink, should be annually saved for the country's bread. Where now it inflames the Nation's brain, tomorrow, if we will, it will build the Nation's brawn.

There is but one way to suppress this tremendous drain upon the Nation's strength. A country that bleeds in the vortex of war abroad should not be bled at home, by the waste that flows from the hand of distilled and malted greed which offers nothing in aid either in furthering peace or prosecuting war.

Does anyone doubt the price we pay in times of peace to meet the cost of war,—ruthless war,—waged by drink upon our homes? The crushed and bleeding hearts of women, the shriveling, hungry bodies of little children, the broken characters of men,—do these not represent a price,—a tremendous yearly toll? Will some one count the children of the slums? Are these not dead to the Nation's potential strength? By the slow torment of want, neglect, disease and vice are these not worse than dead?

Shall we take a census of the once happy homes, of

cheerful wives and mothers,—of daughters, young girls, just blooming into beautiful womanhood? Shall we follow the course of these in the wake of drink? Hands and brains untrained, perhaps, to fight for bread. Refined, many of them and, thank God, many of them are still refined! Shall we study vice,—the waste, the slag of society,—and trace it back to its cause? Then, when responsibility is fixed and the awful carnage of peace laid bare, shall we understand that the enemy of mankind, now in our midst, is far more destructive than are the ruthless shells and torpedoes of any foreign power. The carnage of war, at least yields glory to our flag; the carnage of drink yields only vice and shame,—and death. Which is the greater cost,—war for the Nation's safety and honor, or drink for the country's peril and dishonor?

In plain words the American people by abolishing the liquor traffic will save one thousand millions of dollars annually. Less than one-fourth of this saving will pay the interest on the first cost of war, leaving us a net gain of seven hundred and fifty-five millions annually. With one-half of the waste of drink saved, we can finance fifteen billions of bonds, dedicated to preserve civilization, and still save to our people five hundred and ten millions, annually. With the saving of the Nation's drink bill we can finance an army

so equipped, and a navy so powerful, that, were we so disposed, the American Nation might require the warlike battleships and submarines of the world to halt beyond fifty or a hundred miles of American shores, and, first saluting respectfully, ask permission to approach the harbors of the western hemisphere. The American people are paying, annually, tribute to the liquor industry exceeding the price of the world's peace. Today we are paying one thousand million dollars, not to protect American manhood and womanhood but to destroy it. Tomorrow, if we will, we can lift this burden from the American people and, with the savings,—with no further charge to us,—guarantee and enforce peace throughout the world, suppressing, at the same time, a ruthless vice at home. Today we, by choice, have the saloons. Tomorrow,—”

Now he looked up once more at the flag. Over his face spread an expression of sublime reverence,—of complete trust.

“Sons and daughters of Gloryland,” he said, “let us look with confidence to the tribunes of the people and—to tomorrow.”



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**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

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